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THE POPES AND THEIR CHURCH

A CANDID ACCOUNT

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

(*Author of "Twelve Years in a Monastery," etc.*)

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PREFACE

THE chief paradox of our age is the survival of the Church of Rome. The choicest irony of that paradox is that, while the Church decays rapidly in the Latin countries, it *seems* to make material progress in England and the United States.

The purpose of this book is to explain that its boast of primitiveness, of immutability, of flat defiance of the spirit of progress, of truculent refusal to compromise with the modern mind, is fully justified; and to explain the machinery by means of which such a boast can win any measure of success. I explain what Catholics really believe and do, and how they contrive to believe and do these weird things, yet survive, in the twentieth century.

There are about 200,000,000 Roman Catholics in the world. I imagine the shade of Pope Innocent III frowning sombrely. Only 200,000,000 out of 2,000,000,000! I imagine the shade of Voltaire politely representing to him that it is surely miracle enough that 200,000,000 people of the twentieth century still chase devils with "holy" water, see the entire living body of Christ in a crumb of bread, confess their sins to priests, and call the Papacy "the Holy See."

But of the 200,000,000 no less than 100,000,000 are entirely illiterate, and do not count. They would, if they were so taught, believe that the Pope,

like the Grand Lama of Thibet, has five thousand devils bottled in the Vatican. They would believe that Pope Alexander VI was "conceived immaculate." They would believe that the wails of burning Protestants have been distinctly heard by a Catholic scientist in the crater of Vesuvius or Popocatepetl. They are not a problem. And since half the remainder of the faithful are either children or little removed from children in their mental outfit, they also are not a problem.

But a large proportion of the thirty million English, German, and American Catholics *are* a problem. Grave judges and clever literary men speak respectfully of the "Holy Father"; kiss supposed relics of saints and martyrs; dab their foreheads with holy water to keep the devil away; meekly tell their sins to a priest; prostrate themselves in abject adoration before a little white disk which, they say, *is* the living Jesus Christ; chant hymns about this "vale of tears," and how they long to be delivered from it; and call this sort of thing "the priceless pearl of their faith." They have an almost unspeakable scorn for any other religion; and the more intellectual it is, the more they scorn it. They think Herbert Spencer a small-witted mumbler of sonorous rubbish, and they tell you to read Thomas Aquinas for enlightenment.

When you press them, you discover that they have never read a line of either Herbert or Thomas. Spencer, you find, these adult and alert neighbours of yours are "forbidden" to read; forbidden by the man to whom they confide their sins on Saturday night. You rub your eyes, or your ears, and you

inquire further; and you discover the most ingenious system that was ever devised for keeping educated people uneducated. This is the system of "Catholic Truth." The Catholic must read his own literature (duly authorized by the bishop, whose beaver hat is stamped on the front page), and must not read any that differs from it. Catholics are safely kept within the compound of "Catholic Truth," and it will be understood that quaint doctrines may be imposed under such circumstances.

Of these, at once the strangest and the most characteristic is the belief in the divine foundation and special divine protection of the Church; and I therefore devote half this work to the history of the Church and its rulers. In writing this sketch I have had before me, at every important or disputed stage, the original authorities. I give references to them where they may be useful, but I have covered so much of the ground in more academic fashion in a larger work (*A History of the Popes*; 1939) that for some of the Popes I may refer to that work. It will be enough to assure the reader that I have avoided the disputable statements which are often made in popular contributions to this controversy. It will be found, for instance, that the authentic deeds of the Popes of the tenth or the fifteenth century suffice, without quoting untrustworthy writers, to enable one to judge the Catholic claim of possessing a Holy Father, a Holy See, and a special measure of the interest of the Holy Ghost.

The second section describes the other doctrines and practices, and much of the peculiar discipline, of the Roman Church. I am so frequently described

as a writer of portentous solemnity that I need not fear a charge of frivolity and flippancy. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton has explained (*Heretics*, ch. xvi), I am entirely incapable of frivolity or humour. This has been to me a precious safeguard in wandering through so singular a world; while the knowledge that I was once a priest and professor of the Church will keep the reader confident that I have not mistaken the religion of ancient Mexico or modern Thibet for that on which I profess to write.

J. M.

Section I

THE HISTORY OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

Chapter I

THE ORIGIN OF THE PAPACY

Of all the fictions which still shelter from the storm of modern criticism under the leaky umbrella of "Catholic Truth," the legend of the divine foundation of the Papacy and the Papal system is quite the boldest and most romantic. No divine force, but a pitifully human series of forgeries and coercions, of pious frauds and truculent ambitions, perpetrated in an age of deep ignorance, built up the Papal power, hierarchy, and creed.

The Christian hierarchy arose in a very simple way. In the primitive community, which met at times to break bread in memory of Christ and meditate on his words, some division of labour was needed. It fell to "the elder" to break the bread and address the little group. It fell to a few of the younger men to carry round the bread—to be "ministers" or servants. Then, as scandals grew among the brethren and sisters, it was just as natural to appoint an "overseer" for each group of communities. In Greek, which these early Christians generally spoke (even at Rome), elder is *presbyteros*; minister or servant is *diaconos*; and overseer is *episcopos*. Hence the words priest, deacon, and bishop.

Certain of these primitive communities were believed to have been founded by the immediate followers of Christ, the apostles, and they were called "apostolic churches," and entitled to especial respect. Until the fifth or sixth century the Roman Church was just one of these "apostolic" churches. Its bishop

was called "Pope" only because every bishop was called "Pope" (as every priest is in the East to-day) during the first few centuries.

But the Roman Pope had two peculiar advantages, and these formed the foundation of his ambition to rule the whole Church. In the first place, Rome was the metropolis of the Empire, the greatest city of the world. In the second place, it was somehow generally believed by the end of the second century, though there is no other serious evidence of the fact, that the Roman Church had been founded by Peter.

In the Gospels Peter has a remarkable position. Christ is represented as saying to him (*Matthew* xvi, 18): "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [*petra*] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." This poor little pun on Peter's name was obviously not made by Christ. The word "church" had no meaning at all in the days of Christ and Peter. A Galilean fisherman would have asked in astonishment what this mysterious thing was which was to be built upon him. There was no such word in Aramaic. Christ would have had to say "synagogue"; and he hated synagogues. The pun belongs to a later date. There came a time when Peter and Paul quarrelled, as Paul tells us, and there was a party of Peter and a party of Paul; and some zealous Petrist, possibly of the Roman Church, got that passage interpolated into the Gospel. That crude little pun has changed the course of history and made the life-work of Christ a mockery.

From the Epistle to the Romans, which is generally admitted to be genuine, we gather that there were a few Christian families at Rome, living in obscurity in the squalid shipping suburb, by the year A.D. 59. Probably three years later Paul reached Rome and was put to death there after two years of arguing in the poor rooms of his followers. I have examined at

length all the evidence for this early period in a recent and larger work, *A History of the Popes* (1939) and several other volumes and need say here only that the "Letter of the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth," though not unchallenged, is the decisive document. Catholic writers quite falsely represent it as an assertion of his authority by Pope Clement in the last decade of the first century and make him base his authority on St. Peter. On the contrary, the letter is written in the name of the Roman community, not of its bishop, and is a friendly appeal from one church to another. It states that Paul came to Rome and was martyred there, but it does not even say that Peter ever came to Rome, much less died there. The one or two non-Catholic historians who have admitted the presence of Peter at Rome seem to have overlooked this most important fact. At the end of the century the Roman community was still just one amongst many and claimed no authority. Nor is there the least recognition of such authority in the letters of Ignatius and the works of Irenæus, which are never quoted. Indeed, as the Church was now torn asunder by the Gnostic controversy, the fact that no Eastern bishop made the least appeal to Rome to settle it plainly shows that until near the end of the second century, when the forgery about Peter was in circulation, Rome did not even claim any authority.

The seed began to germinate before the end of the second century. The ecclesiastical historian Eusebius tells us (bk. v, 34) that Bishop Victor, of Rome, heard that the Churches of Asia Minor did not celebrate Easter on the same day as the Romans, and he *commanded* them to change. That was about the year 190. Catholic Truth is very careful to tell of this first assertion of Papal supremacy, and just as careful to suppress the sequel. The bishops of Asia Minor told Victor, in very plain Greek, to mind

his own business. Victor, haughtily, threatened to excommunicate them, whereupon even the bishops of the West "bitterly attacked Victor" (Eusebius says) for his arrogance, and declared that they would take no notice of his excommunication. Possibly they knew that, as Bishop Hippolytus tells us, Pope Victor was a friend of the emperor's mistress, Marcia, the vicious companion of one of the most brutal of the emperors.

It was thirty years after this severe snub before a Roman Pope repeated the claim. Tertullian, the famous African writer, speaks disdainfully in one of his works (*On Chastity*, ch. i) of some bishop who calls himself "the supreme pontiff" and "the bishop of bishops." This seems to refer to Pope Callistus; and if Tertullian had known the personal history of that remarkable adventurer, he would have used even more violent language. For seventeen centuries Callistus has been honoured in the Roman Church as "Saint and Martyr." But about ninety years ago we discovered the manuscript of a work written by a Roman contemporary of Callistus, and it pitilessly exposes the way in which the Roman Church, by means of deliberate forgeries, glorified its early bishops. Callistus was an astute ex-slave, of dubious character, who died comfortably in his bed after a very brief, but very remarkable, tenure of the Papal office. For Catholic Truth and the Papal officials, of course, this discovery makes no difference. For them Callistus is still "Saint and Martyr"; and, by an exquisite irony, his rival and exposer, the anti-Pope Hippolytus, is also a "Saint and Martyr" in the Roman literature![1]

Thirty years later, in 252, we have another opportunity to test the Papal claim Those were days

[1] For details and authorities, on this and many other points here discussed, see the author's *Crises in the History of the Papacy* (1916) and *A History of the Popes* (1939).

when bishops did not mince their words, and the famous Bishop Cyprian of Carthage tells his "dear brother" Cornelius of Rome, in a letter (*Ep.* lv), precisely what he thinks of him for listening amiably to certain schismatical ruffians who have gone to Rome to complain of Cyprian. Naturally it is enough for the Catholic writer that they have appealed to Rome. Even Mgr. Duchesne, one of the ablest of modern Catholic scholars, emphasizes the fact, and he quotes Cyprian describing Rome as "the principal Church—the source of sacerdotal unity." [1] The truth is that Cyprian sternly rebukes Pope Cornelius for interfering. "Why did these men come to *you*?" he asks; and he goes on:

> Since it is acknowledged by all of us, and is right and just, that a case must be heard where a crime has been committed, and that each pastor shall have his own portion of the flock, and render to God an account of his conduct, those whom we rule must not roam about and disturb the good relations of bishops by their lying audacity.

Quite clearly Bishop Cyprian knew nothing about the divine institution of the Roman supremacy! But Mgr. Duchesne presently finds a clearer proof. In the year 254 the bishops of Gaul wrote to tell Cyprian, the Carthaginian Pope, and Stephen, the Roman Pope, that one of their colleagues had been deposed for evil conduct, and he refused to submit. Cyprian therefore wrote to Stephen, and, says Duchesne (p. 304), "according to Cyprian it was the duty of the Pope to intervene in Gaul." It is a pity that even the most distinguished Catholic scholars pervert history in the interest of the Papacy. What Cyprian plainly says (*Ep.* lxvii) is, that it is "*our* duty" (the equal duty of Stephen and Cyprian), and that makes all the difference in the world. The Gallic bishops had appealed to both. Cyprian had

[1] *The Early History of the Christian Church*, I, 303.

responded at once; and his letter to Stephen, for whom he had no respect, is a caustic injunction to do *his* duty as soon as possible.

Nor was this the last word of these African bishops, whom the Catholic writer represents as admitting Rome's supremacy. A few years later we again find Cyprian writing to his "dear brother," who has been pushing his claim. He writes now in the name of all the African bishops, and he closes his letter (*Ep.* lxxii) with this heavy sarcasm:

> *We* use no violence and make laws for none, because each prelate has the right to follow his own judgment in the administration of the Church, and must render an account to the Lord.

Stephen, in reply, brandished his poor Papal credentials, and told them to submit or be excommunicated. The Africans met in solemn council to frame a reply, and it was one of flat and contemptuous defiance. It opens with these bitterly ironic words:

> *We* judge no man, and *we* cut off no man from communion for differing from *us*. None of *us* regards himself as the bishop of bishops, or seeks by tyrannical threats to compel his colleagues to obey him.

And this letter, Mgr. Duchesne and the Catholic apologists assure their readers, does not call into question the Pope's claim of authority!

The African Church, we must remember, is of peculiar significance in this respect. It was not only more important than any other section of Western Christendom, but it looked to Rome as its "mother-church." Rome was the very heart of that mighty Empire of which the northern fringe of Africa was but a colony. Hence it is that the African bishops speak of Rome as "the principal church" and "the source of sacerdotal unity." But to say, in face of these repeated letters, that the

African bishops acknowledged the authority of Rome over them is a piece of audacity which Catholic Truth alone could achieve without a blush of modesty. At that time, and until the days when Goth and Vandal shattered the provincial churches, the claims of Rome were a laughing-stock to all. Mere compliments to the Pope are of no more significance than they are to-day in the mouths of many Anglicans.

We have next to see how this Roman ambition was enforced by such violence, fraud, and forgery as have no parallel in the history of civilized religion. I have said that the Roman Church remained until the end of the third century, although it scandalized the Africans by dropping the ancient discipline and admitting large numbers of loose-living Romans (as Bishop Hippolytus tells us), a poor, small, and ignorant body. We know from the semi-official Calendar of the Popes (*Liber Pontificalis*) that they had not a chapel of the humblest description until about 220, and that they could not afford silver vessels for altar use until about 230. We have reason to believe that they did not in the year 250 number more than 20,000 in a city of a million people, although they had suffered scarcely any persecution for seventy years. Their sufferings really began—we will presently set aside their mendacious accounts of earlier persecutions—under the Emperor Decius, and continued under Diocletian. Very few were martyred, the whole 20,000, except a few score, denying their faith, and by the year 310 the Roman Church was a tiny and despised body.

Then there occurred three events which entirely changed the situation. The first was the conversion of the Emperor Constantine. Dazed by the sudden change from fierce hatred to favour, the Roman Christians emerged from the catacombs into a shower of gold, and their church grew rapidly. Constantine used no pressure, but—the path of pro-

motion now lay through Christianity, as the Pagans sadly complained. The Pope began to live in a palace. His bishopric began at last to share the prestige of the imperial city.

The second event which favoured the Roman ambition was that in the fourth century Eastern Christendom was torn into shreds, and spattered with blood, by the fierce struggle of Arians and Trinitarians. The Roman Church, which was in these early centuries very far from being a seat of learning, did not understand the subtleties of the Greeks, and it remained simply Trinitarian. Naturally the Trinitarian bishops of the East then began to flatter it and appeal to it. They did not at any time grant its claim of supremacy, though in the fourth century they might have found this a useful weapon against the Arians. In the very heat of the struggle they laid it down, in the famous Council of Nicæa (Canon VI), that the Bishop of Rome had merely the same authority *in his own region* as had the Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch in their regions. In fact, when Pope Liberius himself incurred the taint of heresy (as we shall see), when Pope Damasus proved so slow to assist and so arrogant that St. Basil used stronger language about the Roman bishop than even Tertullian and Cyprian had done, the Eastern bishops clustered round Constantinople and left the Popes to pursue their ambition in the West. But for a time the freedom from heresy, the comparative calm, of the Roman Church gave it some prestige, and many of the flattering tributes (often deliberately enhanced by later Roman forgers) which the Catholic writer quotes belong to this diplomatic period.

The third event was the most important of all. We have seen, and shall see further, how the Western bishops were just as disdainful as the Eastern of the Roman Pope's claim to rule them. But very soon

after the establishment of Christianity in Europe there occurred the mighty downpour of barbarians from the forests of Germany which destroyed the Roman Empire and prepared Europe for the Middle Ages. This great catastrophe shattered the provincial churches—of Gaul and Spain and Africa—annihilated the Roman school-system, and brought a sudden and dense darkness upon Southern Europe and Africa. There are other points to consider before we examine this closely, but it must be mentioned, in anticipation, here as the third and chief event which enabled the Popes to enforce their fraudulent claim.

During the fourth century, as is known, Christianity became the established religion of the Empire. Only fifty years before it had pathetically pleaded for religious freedom. Now the Roman Church, guiding the consciences of Emperors, lightly adopted persecution in its turn, and fell upon all the other religions with truculent severity. The rival temples were closed, or converted into churches. For thirty years the emperors persecuted all other sects, even sentence of death being decreed against them. The city of Rome became, by what we should call Act of Parliament, entirely Christian. The Roman bishopric gained incalculably in wealth and power.

The writers of the time leave no room for doubt that this material gain was accompanied by a very serious loss of character. But in estimating this we must again be on our guard against "Catholic Truth." The Roman Church did not fall so far as is sometimes believed, because it had not nearly so far to fall. The pretty and touching picture of that Church during the persecutions which is still given in Catholic literature is appallingly untruthful. I have spoken of lies and forgeries, and the reader may feel that this is intemperate language. Not in the least. The story of the condition of the Roman Church before the conversion of Constantine has

been grossly and deliberately falsified, and the forgeries by means of which this was done begin about the period we have reached.

According to the Catholic writers, and even the official liturgy of their Church, the Roman community of the first three centuries was so decked and perfumed with saints and martyrs that it *must* have had a divine spirit in it. Now the far greater part, the overwhelmingly greater part, of the *Acts of the Martyrs* and *Lives of the Saints* on which this claim is based are impudent forgeries, perpetrated by Roman Christians from the fourth to the eighth century in order to give a divine halo to the very humble, and very human, history of their Church.

This is not merely a contention of "heretics and unbelievers." It is not even a new discovery. The legends of the martyrs are so gross that Catholic historians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries frequently denounced them. Cardinal Baronius and Father Pagi repeatedly rejected them. The learned and pious Tillemont, in the fifth volume of his *Mémoires*, slays hundreds of them. Pope Benedict XIV, of the eighteenth century, a scholar who by some mischance was made a Pope, was so ashamed of the extent to which these forgeries permeate the official ritual of his Church that he entered upon a great reform, but the cardinals and monks obstructed his work, and the literature of the Church still teems with legends from these tainted sources. In fact, many of these forgeries were already notorious in the year 494, when Pope Gelasius timidly and haltingly condemned them.

These forgeries are so gross that one needs very little historical knowledge in order to detect them. Large numbers of Roman martyrs are, like the Pope Callistus whom I have mentioned, put in the reign of the friendly Emperor Alexander Severus, who certainly persecuted none. One of these Roman

forgers, of the sixth or seventh century, is bold enough to claim five thousand martyrs for Rome alone under the gentle Alexander Severus! Other large numbers of Roman martyrs are put in the reign of the Emperor Maximin, and Dr. Görres has shown that there were hardly any put to death in the whole Empire, least of all at Rome, under Maximin.[1] The semi-official catalogue of the Popes makes saints and martyrs of no less than thirteen of the Popes of the third century, when there were scarcely more than three or four.

No one questions that the Roman Church had a certain number of martyrs in the days of the genuine persecutions, but nine-tenths of the pretty stories which are popular in Catholic literature—the stories of St. Agnes and St. Cecilia, of St. Lucia and St. Catherine, of St. Lawrence and St. George and St. Sebastian, and so on—are pious romances. Even when the martyrdom may be genuine, the Catholic story of it is generally a late and unbridled fiction.

A short account of the havoc which modern scholars have made of the *Acts of the Martyrs* is given by a Catholic professor, Albert Ehrhard, of the Vienna University, and will cause any inquiring Catholic to shudder.[2] Dr. Ehrhard mentions a French work, *L'Amphithèâtre Flavien*, by Father Delehaye, a Jesuit, and calls it "an important contribution to the criticism of the Roman acts of the martyrs." It is a "criticism" of such a nature that it dissolves into fiction all the touching pictures (down to Mr. G B. Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*) of the "martyrs of the Coliseum." It proves that no Christians were ever martyred in the Amphitheatre (Coliseum). The English translation of Father Delehaye's *Legends of the Saints* (1907) gives an appalling account of these Roman forgeries. Another scholar has, Professor Ehrhard admits (p. 555), shown that "a whole class"

[1] *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie*, 1876, p. 539.
[2] *Die altchristliche Literatur* (1900), pp. 539–92.

of these saints and martyrs are actually pagan myths which have been converted into Christian martyrs. The whole literature which this Catholic professor surveys is one mighty massacre of saints and martyrs, very few surviving the ordeal. These fictions are often leniently called "pious fancies" and "works of edification." Modern charity covers too many ancient sins. These things were intended to deceive; they have deceived countless millions for fourteen centuries, and in the hands of priests they deceive millions to-day.

The early Roman Church was a poor little sect, like any other. It had some noble-spirited martyrs during the three or four short persecutions (in two hundred and fifty years) which affected it; but it had a far larger number who either sacrificed to the gods or bought a false certificate that they had done so. It had many men and women of strict life, and still more of lax life. Its first thirty Popes were obscure men of no distinction in the Church, of no learning, who just managed to hold together their ten or twenty thousand followers until the golden days of Constantine began.

Then, with the enlargement and enrichment of the Church, the saints almost disappeared and the sinners multiplied. Pope Liberius was sent into exile for refusing to sign an heretical formula. But when he heard that "the faithful" had set up an anti-Pope he "embraced the heretical perversity" (St. Jerome says), and returned to struggle for his flesh-pots. His followers and those of his rival fought terrible battles, in which many were slain; and it is one of the most piquant outcomes of the early zeal to make martyrs (on paper) that the semi-official Catalogue of the Popes [1] included the anti-Pope Felix,

[1] An English translation of this was published by Columbia University in 1916. The editor, Dr. Loomis, warns us that we have in it much "manifest fiction and deliberate fabrication."

who died in his bed, as "Saint and Martyr"! Felix is, like Saint and Martyr Callistus, one of the jewels in the crown of the early Roman Church.

When Pope Liberius died the bloody battle was renewed. Two Popes, Damasus and Ursicinus, were elected, and we have unchallenged contemporary records of the way in which the supporters of Damasus ("Saint" Damasus, of course—though his Christian opponents called him, significantly, "the tickler of women's ears," and he was sued in the civil court for adultery) fell with swords and axes and staves upon the other faction. In one church alone they, after a furious siege, killed no less than one hundred and sixty of their Christian brethren. The deadly conflict spread all over Rome, and lasted for weeks. There were more martyrs at Rome in that one month (October, 366) than in the whole of the "persecutions"; and again a number of the murdered supporters of the anti-Pope found a place in the Roman lists of martyrs!

In face of the letters of St. Jerome, who lived in Rome about that time, it is useless to pretend that these were the isolated skirmishes of "the lower orders." The community was generally corrupt. Catholic Truth is, of course, quite familiar with the letters of St. Jerome. From them it quotes to an admiring public the edifying life of Fabiola and Paula and other Christian ladies. But it omits to add that Jerome very emphatically describes this little group of his pupils as a small oasis of virtue in a great desert of vice. Priests, nuns, and laity, men and women, he describes as sordid, greedy, unchaste, and utterly irreligious.[1] He actually forbids his virtuous young ladies ever to remain in a room with a Roman priest; and when the Christian

[1] See especially Letters xxii and cxxv (in the Migne edition). Jerome repeats a hundred times that this is the quite general condition of the Roman Church.

Emperors are compelled to declare all legacies to priests invalid he sadly confesses that it is a just censure of their greed.

This was the real Roman world which Catholic Truth describes as converted to the true faith and the ways of virtue; and Damasus was the Pope who, above all others, pressed the Papal ambition for supremacy. Yet here we touch only the lighter fringe of the dark story of the making of the Papacy.

Chapter II

EUROPE DECAYS AND THE POPES THRIVE

Simultaneously with this forging of credentials and lowering of character in the Roman Church there was a singular transformation of its originally simple offices. The Pagans were accustomed to highly-coloured and picturesque ceremonies, and the new Church indulgently met their wishes. Hymns, altars, and statues; incense, holy water, and burning candles; silk vestments and bits of ritual—these things were borrowed freely from the suppressed temples. There must have been a remarkable resemblance between the services in the suppressed temple of Mithra on the Vatican Hill and the services in the new temple dedicated to St. Peter on, or near, the same spot.

Other religions contributed their share. The Pagans had been accustomed to variety, and so the worship of the saints and the Virgin Mother, which was unknown in the Church for three centuries, was encouraged. Then relics had to be invented for the saints, just as saints were sometimes invented for relics. We hear every few years of bishops being directed "in a vision" to discover the body of some martyr or saint. Palestine also began to do a magnificent trade in relics with Italy; beginning with the "discovery of the true cross," at which no historian even glances to-day.

The events I have described bring us to the close of the fourth century, when Pope Innocent I, a strong

man, undertook to enforce the Papal claim in the West. In the Eastern Church there was still nothing but contempt for that claim In the year 381 the Greek bishops met at Constantinople, and in the third canon of the Council they expressly laid it down that the Bishop of "new Rome" (Constantinople) was equal in rank to the Bishop of "old Rome."

The great figure of the African Church—indeed, of the whole Church—at that time was St Augustine. Catholic Truth is very concerned to show that this great leader recognized the Papal claim, and it repeatedly puts into his mouth the famous phrase: "Rome has spoken; the case is settled" The heretic Pelagius was then active, and the implication is that St. Augustine recognized the condemnation of this man by Rome as the authoritative settlement of the dispute.

Now, not only did neither Augustine nor any other bishop use those words, but they are an entirely false summary of what he did say His words, in his 131st sermon, are: "Already the decisions of two [African] councils have been sent to the Apostolic See, and a rescript has reached us The case is settled." The settlement lies plainly in the *joint* condemnation of Pelagius by Africa and Rome Nor did the matter end here Pope Zosimus at first pronounced in favour of Pelagius, and the African bishops forced him to recant In order to justify his further interference, the Pope then quoted two canons of the Council of Nicæa which astonished the Africans. After inquiry in the East it was proved that *these canons were Roman forgeries*, and the African bishops, maliciously informing the Pope of their discovery, trusted that they would hear "no more of his pompousness." They did hear more of it, and a few years later they sent to the Pope a letter (happily preserved) in which they scornfully reject his claim to interfere, and advise him not to "introduce the empty pride

of the world into the Church of Christ, which offers the light of simplicity and lowliness to those who seek God." And Catholic Truth has the audacity to tell the faithful that these African bishops admitted the supremacy of the Pope! [1]

Rome fell in the year 410, but the charm of the great city laid its thrall upon the barbarians, and the Roman See suffered comparatively little. The Spanish Church was next overrun, and the Vandals, crossing the Straits of Gibraltar, trod underfoot the African colony and, as they were Arians, ruined its Church. The provincial bishoprics no longer produced prelates of any strength or learning, and the weak new men, quarrelling incessantly amid the ruins of the Empire, began to appeal more frequently to Rome. Dense ignorance succeeded the culture of the great Empire. The Popes did not rise, but the other bishops fell. "In a land of blind men," says an old French proverb, "the one-eyed man is king."

That the Roman bishopric did not change for the better in that age of general corruption its official record shows. At the death of Zosimus it became again the bloody prize of contending factions. Two Popes, Eulalius and Boniface, were elected, and on Easter morn, when each strove desperately for the prestige of conducting the great ceremony, a mighty struggle reddened once more the streets and squares of the city. A few years later, however, Rome again obtained a strong and zealous Pope, Leo I, and the claim of supremacy advanced a few steps farther. The Church still resisted the Papal claim. When Leo attempted to overrule Bishop Hilary of Gaul, one of the few strong men remaining in the provinces,

[1] What is claimed to be the most scholarly publication of the Church, the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, is the worst of all. Under the heading "Pope" Father Joyce (S.J. of course) says that Rome claimed supremacy from the earliest times and no Church ever questioned it. We will return to this.

Hilary (Leo says, *Epp* x, 3) used "language which no layman even should dare to use."

In the East, Leo was not innocent of trickery. His Legates attempted to impose upon the Greeks the spurious canons which Pope Zosimus had attempted to use in Africa, and they were mercilessly exposed. In the fifteenth session of the Council of Chalcedon the Greek bishops renewed the famous canon which declared the Bishop of Constantinople equal to the Bishop of Rome. In an ironical letter they informed Leo of this, yet we find the Papal clerks sending to Gaul, in Leo's name, shortly afterwards, an alleged (and spurious) copy of the proceedings at Chalcedon, in which the Greek bishops are represented as calling Leo "head of the universal Church"! We shall see that there is hardly one of even the "great" Popes who did not resort to trickery of this kind

The Greek Church has retained to this day its defiance of Rome Western Christendom, on the other hand, has submitted to the Papacy, and we have next to see how this submission was secured. This is explained in part by the enfeeblement of the provincial bishoprics, but especially by the dense ignorance which now settled upon Europe The reader will not have forgotten the forgeries which I described in the last chapter The products of this pious industry included documents less innocent than the pretty stories about St Agnes and St. Cecilia. Some of these—certain spurious or falsified canons of Greek councils—we have already met The forgers grew bolder as the shades of the medieval night fell upon Europe, and some romances of very practical value to the Papacy were fabricated

The chief of these, *The Acts of St Silvester*, is believed by many scholars to have been composed in the East, about the year 430 However that may be, it soon passed to Europe, and it became one of the main

foundations of the Papal claim of temporal supremacy. After giving a gloriously fantastic account of the conversion and baptism of the Emperor Constantine, it makes that monarch, when he leaves Rome for the East (after murdering his wife and son), hand over to the Papacy the secular rule of all Europe to the west of Greece! It is a notorious and extravagant forgery, but it was generally accepted, and was used by the Popes.

A similar document, *The Constitution of St Silvester*, is believed by modern historians to have been fabricated in Rome itself, in the year 498 Two Popes were elected once more, and on this occasion the customary deadly feud existed for three years. The document is supposed to have been invented, in the course of this struggle, by the supporters of the anti-Pope Rome and Italy were now so densely ignorant that forgers—of relics, legends, canons, pills, or anything else—enjoyed a golden age The one force on the side of enlightenment was the heretical and anti-clerical King of Italy, Theodoric the Ostrogoth; and the Roman clergy intrigued so busily against his rule that he had to imprison Pope John I. Rome split into Roman and Gothic factions, and terrible fights and bribery assisted " the light of the Holy Ghost " in deciding the Papal elections In the early part of the sixth century there were six Popes in fifteen years, and there is grave suspicion that some were murdered

At last Pope Silverius opened the gates of Rome to the troops of the Greek Emperor, but the change of sovereign only led the Papacy to a deeper depth of ignominy The Greek Empress Theodora, the unscrupulous and very pious lady who had begun life in a brothel and ended it on the Byzantine throne, had a little heresy of her own; and a very courtly Roman deacon, named Vigilius, had promised to favour it if she made him Pope " Trump up a charge

against Silverius [the Pope], and send him here," she wrote to the Greek commander at Rome; and the Pope was promptly deposed for treason and replaced by Vigilius. But Pope Vigilius found it too dangerous to fulfil his bargain; and, amid the jeers and stones of the Romans, he was shipped to Constantinople to incur the fiendish vengeance of the pious Theodora. The Romans, who openly accused him of murder, heard with joy of his adventures and death, and they vented their wrath upon his friend and successor, Pope Pelagius.

Such had already become the Papacy which Catholic historians describe as distinguished for holiness and orthodoxy, under special protection of the Holy Spirit, from its foundation. But this is merely a mild foretaste of its medieval qualities. For a time Gregory the Great (590–604) raised its prestige once more; but even the pontificate of that deeply religious man has grave defects. His fulsome praise of the thoroughly vicious and murderous Queen Brunichildis (Letters, vii, 5, 50, etc.) and of the brutal Eastern Emperor Phocas, and his wild rejoicing at the murder of the Emperor Maurice (who had called him "a fool") (xiii, 31), are revolting. His ignorance and credulity were unlimited. His largest works, *The Magna Moralia* and *The Dialogues*, are incredible hotch-potches of stories about devils and miracles. He sternly rebuked bishops who tried to educate their people (vi, 54); and he did not perceive that the appalling vices and crimes which he deplores almost in every letter—the general drunkenness and simony and immorality of the priests, and the horrible prevalence of violence—were mainly due to ignorance. He was one of the makers of the Middle Ages.

After Gregory the Papacy sinks slowly into the fetid morass of the Middle Ages. The picture of the morals of the Roman Church by Jerome in the fourth century, of the whole Western Church by the priest

Salvianus in the fifth century, and by Bishop Gregory of Tours in the sixth century, are almost without parallel in literature. It would, however, be dreary work to follow the fortunes of the Papacy, as well as we can trace them in the barbarous writings of the time, through that age of steady degeneration. Contested elections, bloody riots, bribes, brawls with the Eastern bishops, punctuate the calendar. Twenty obscure Popes cross the darkening stage in the course of a hundred years. I resume the story at the point where the Popes begin to win temporal power.

In the eighth century the Greek emperors were again in the toils of heresy, and the ruling people in the north of Italy, the Lombards, were still Arians. The Popes began to look beyond the Alps for an orthodox protector, and their gaze was attracted to the Franks. Rome found it convenient to regard the Franks as an enlightened and pious race, though we know from the reports of St. Boniface to the Popes that the Frank clergy and princes were among the worst in Europe. Clerics, we read, had four or five concubines in their beds. Drunkenness, brawling, simony, and corruption tainted nearly the whole of the clergy and the monks. These things were overlooked; nor did the Lateran (at that time the palace of the Popes) rebuke Charles Martel for his own corruption in despoiling the Church.

Charles Martel paid no attention to the flattering offer of the Popes, but his son Pippin found occasion to use it. He was " Mayor of the Palace," and he desired to oust the king and occupy his throne. He sent envoys to Pope Zachary to ask if he might conscientiously do so. Not only *might* he, Zachary replied, but he *must;* and from that time onward Rome was able to claim that Pippin and his famous son, Charlemagne, owed their throne to the Papacy.

It was not long before Pope Stephen II, being hard pressed by the Lombards, appealed to the

gratitude of the ignorant Frank, and a very remarkable bargain was struck. Pippin accepted the title of "Patricius" (vaguely, Prince) of Rome, and in return he promised to wrest from the Lombard heretics the whole territory which belonged to the Popes. It is true that very considerable estates had previously been given to the Papacy. Gregory the Great, who believed that the end of the world was at hand, had induced large numbers of nobles to leave their estates to the Church, since their sons would have no use for them, and he farmed and ruled immense territories. He became the richest man and largest slave-holder in Europe. Gregory had been as shrewd in material matters as he had been credulous in religion. But historians suspect, and there is very good reason to suspect, that the Papal envoys showed Pippin *The Acts of St. Silvester*, and in virtue of it claimed nearly the whole of Italy.

The gruff and superstitious Pippin swore a mighty oath that he would win back for "the Blessed Peter" the lands which these hoggish heretics had appropriated, and he went to Italy and secured them. What precise amount of Italy he handed over to the Papacy we do not know. The Papacy has not preserved the authentic text of a single one of these "donations" on which it bases its claims of temporal power. There is a document, known as the "Fantuzzian Fragment," which professes to give the terms of "the Donation of Pippin," but scholars are agreed that this is a shameless Roman forgery. It is, however, certain that Pippin gave the Papacy, probably on the strength of the older forgery, a very considerable part of north and central Italy, including the entire Governorship of Ravenna, and returned to France.

To this territory the Papacy had no just title whatever, and the King of the Lombards at once reoccupied it. Pope Stephen stormed the French

monarch with passionate and piteous appeals to recover it for him, but Pippin refused to move again. Then the Pope took a remarkable step. Among his surviving letters there is one (no. v) addressed to Pippin which is written *in the name of St. Peter.* The Pope had forged it in the name of Peter, and passed it off on the ignorant Frank as a miraculous appeal from the Apostle himself. By that pious stratagem and the earlier forgery the Papacy obtained twenty-three Italian cities with the surrounding country.

Those who affect to doubt whether the Pope really intended to deceive the King seem to forget that the Papacy of the time was deeply stained with crime and forgery. In 768 a noble of the Roman district named "Toto" got together a rabble of priests and laity, and elected his own brother. "Pope" Constantine was a layman, but he was hastily put through the various degrees of ordination and consecration by obliging bishops. No doubt these bishops then claimed their reward and disturbed the older officials. At all events, we read that the chief official of the Papal court, Christopher, and his son Sergius fled to the Lombards, borrowed an army, and marched back upon Rome. A fierce and deadly battle, in which the Lombards won, was followed by the first of a series of horrible acts of vengeance, which will henceforward, from time to time, disgrace the Papacy.

The wretched Constantine, duly consecrated by three bishops, was put upon a horse, in a woman's saddle, with heavy weights to his feet, and conducted ignominiously through the streets of Rome. He was then confined in a monastery, to await trial; but Christopher and Sergius broke into the monastery and cut out the man's eyes. In this condition, his blind face still ghastly from the mutilation, Constantine was brought before a synod in the Pope's palace and tried. The infuriated priests thrashed the wretch with their own hands, and "threw him out."

The end of Constantine is, in the chronicles, left to the imagination His brother also lost his eyes. One of the consecrating bishops lost his eyes and his tongue In short, the supporters of the premature Pope were punished with a savagery that tells us plainly enough the character of the Papacy at that time.

Catholic Truth—which, however, generously admits that there were " some bad Popes," though this does not affect its claim of the special interest of the Holy Ghost in the Papacy—imagines the Pope serenely aloof from these horrors Listen to the sequel. Christopher and Sergius presumed too much upon their services to Pope Stephen, and he grew tired of them and plotted with the Lombard King. They discovered or suspected the plot, and sought to kill the Pope; and it is enough to say that before many days they themselves had their eyes cut from the sockets Christopher was mutilated so brutally that he died There are some Catholic writers who make a show of liberality, and admit that the Pope was " implicated " in this. But the sordid truth is known to us and to these writers on the most absolute authority of the time. In the *Liber Pontificalis* [1] itself we have the explicit testimony of Pope Hadrian I, the greatest Pope of the time, that *Pope Stephen ordered the eyes of Christopher and Sergius to be cut out, and for the sordid reason that King Didier promised to restore the disputed lands if he did so.* Stephen, Hadrian says, admitted this to him.

To such depths had " the Vicars of Christ " sunk now that the greed of temporal sovereignty and wealth was added to the ambition for religious supremacy. And they had, naturally, allowed all Europe to sink to the same level As the letters of

[1] In the sketch of the life of Pope Hadrian, which was written in Rome at the time and is at least semi-official.

St. Boniface and other contemporary documents affirm, the moral condition of England, France, and Germany—Spain had now passed to the Arabs—was unspeakable. Monasteries and nunneries were houses of open debauch—Boniface describes the English nuns as murdering their babies—and the clergy very corrupt. But here I must confine myself to the Vicars of Christ.

Chapter III

THE PAPACY IN THE DARK AGES

The Pope to whom I have referred, Hadrian (or Adrian) I, was one of the most respected and religious prelates in Rome at the time of the horrors I have described, and he succeeded to the Papacy a few years later (772). Under his comparatively clean rule corruption of the more violent kind was suppressed.

But corruption of a different kind was extraordinarily active under Hadrian. Religious as he was, he determined to regain the temporal power, and for that purpose he appealed to Charlemagne. The Lombards were crushed, and Charlemagne came to Rome and confirmed the "donation." Once more the important document which was signed in St. Peter's has been "lost," and we have nothing but Papal forgeries to tell us the extent of the territory ceded to the Papacy. It was in Hadrian's time that "The Donation of Constantine" (a new and finished version of the old forgery) and "The Fantuzzian Fragment" (or "Donation of Pippin") were fabricated in the Papal chancellory, and it is presumably on the basis of these frauds that Charlemagne ceded the territory. Neither the Lombards nor the Italians submitted to the change; and Hadrian's long pontificate, which is almost barren of spiritual work, was one protracted and peevish quarrel about territory. For years Charlemagne seems to have been too disgusted to answer his letters; and the Italian cities, seeing the dishonest way in which the Papal officials

continued to annex, sternly resented the whole temporal power.

Such was the best and most religious Pope in five centuries. Under his successor, Leo III, the brutality began again. The Papacy was now rich; and a rich principality in that lawless age was a focus of crime.

A second defect in the character of Hadrian was that he inaugurated at Rome the disgraceful and profoundly mischievous practice of nepotism: the promotion of relatives. He promoted his nephews, Paschal and Campulus, to high office, though their brutal character cannot have been unknown to him. In the fourth year of Leo's pontificate they conspired to replace him either by one of themselves or by some creature of theirs. On April 25, 799, as Leo rode in state through the streets of Rome in a religious procession, a number of armed men sprang upon him, dragged him from his horse, and proceeded there and then to cut out his eyes and tongue; which would unfit him for the Papal office. The Romans fled. Leo seems to have been a rough man, of low birth, and unpopular. But the men did their work badly, and Paschal and Campulus dragged the Pope into the chapel of a neighbouring monastery, threw him down "in front of the altar," "again" cut out his eyes and tongue (or attempted to complete the work with their knives), beat him, and left him in a pool of blood. Such is the cold and amazing language of the semi-official Papal biographer. Paschal and Campulus were two of the leading clerics.

He recovered and took his complaints to the court of Charlemagne. At the same time the Romans, who seem to have been mainly against the Pope, sent men to charge Leo with certain crimes (apparently, adultery and simony), and the Frank monarch came to Rome and solemnly held a trial of "the Vicar of Christ" and his enemies. Leo was allowed to clear

himself by an oath; and as oaths were as cheap in those days as they were sonorous, and witnesses were not examined, we shall not be very captious if we presume that he was guilty. The traitors were punished in the amiable fashion of Papal Rome. Two days later Leo crowned Charlemagne, creating for him the "Holy Roman Empire" (which was neither holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire); and the grateful monarch confirmed the temporal power and showered gold and jewels upon the Church.

Paschal I, a few years later (823), was reported to Charlemagne as having blinded and beheaded two of the leading Papal officials in his palace. Paschal heatedly asserted his innocence, but as he prevented the Emperor's representatives from holding an inquiry, saying that the men were "rightly put to death," and that the men who killed the accused were clerics and not subject to lay jurisdiction, and as the murders certainly occurred in the Lateran Palace, we easily draw our own conclusions. When Paschal died the Romans angrily refused to grant him the usual Papal funeral, and there was a mighty struggle at the election.

Vice and violence continued to rule Italy, in fact the whole of Christian Europe, while the Arabs set up a brilliant civilization in Spain. No less than forty-two Popes in the Dark Ages (600–1050) did not reign two years. At last another "great Pope" comes on the scene. But just as the "spiritual" Pope Hadrian had avoided vice and crime and encouraged forgery, so did the spiritual Nicholas. In his day (about 850) was perpetrated one of the greatest forgeries of the Middle Ages, the Pseudo-Isidorean Decretals (commonly called "the False Decretals"). This is a collection of early decisions of Popes and Councils, an enormous proportion of which are forged, garbled, or put centuries before their proper date. It was fabricated in France, not in Rome, and

its direct purpose was to justify appeals of distressed clerics to Rome against unjust prelates or lay authorities. It was written in the interest of these clerics. But it greatly increased the Papal power, and it also gave local prelates a basis for evading the commands of their secular rulers. It was an appalling ecclesiastical fabrication.

The fight continued under Nicholas's successor, Hadrian II, and the great bishops more successfully resisted his attempts to handle kings and prelates as if they were lackeys. Charlemagne had treated the Pope in very cavalier fashion. In a work published in his own name (*The Caroline Books*) he had spoken quite contemptuously of the Pope's opinion and the Roman practice in regard to image-worship. No Pope had dared to rebuke his notorious morals. But the successors of Charlemagne were generally weak and foolish men, and the power of the Papacy spread over them. Another forgery was added to its fraudulent foundations, and the age was too grossly ignorant to detect the imposture. Clerics, who monopolized what culture there was, did not expose each other to the laity.

This short period of comparative respectability soon came to a close, and a darker night than ever settled upon the Papacy. At the death of Nicholas Rome had witnessed a revival of the stormy passions of the partisans: a clear proof that there had been no moral reform. Blood had reddened its streets. Nuns had been raped in their convents. Under Hadrian II a Roman had lost his eyes; the wife of another had been whipped, half-naked, through the streets. Hadrian's wife and daughter (he had married in earlier life) were murdered by the son of a bishop who had abducted the daughter. Under John VIII, a violent scatterer of anathemas, there was a conspiracy to kill the Pope, and there was a tradition (not well authenticated) that John was eventually

murdered. Then there began a quarrel which makes the Papal record hideous, and inaugurates nearly a century and a half of degradation.

John VIII had excommunicated Bishop Formosus, of Porto, and on this ground, and because he was already a bishop, he was ineligible for the Papacy. But with the aid of the German faction he attacked the deacon Sergius, who had been elected (at the death of Stephen V), drove him and his party out of Rome, and secured the Papacy. Sergius headed the Italian faction, or those who would bestow the imperial crown upon an Italian prince. They fled to the provinces for aid, and, after another battle, they imprisoned and would depose Formosus. The Pope, however, got help from Germany, drove them from Rome, and ended his brief reign in peace. His successor, Boniface VI, a gouty and disreputable man, died in a fortnight, and the Italian party now obtained power and elected Stephen VI. Their vengeance upon Formosus is a revolting and familiar page of Papal history. The putrid body of the Pope was dragged from its grave, put on the pontifical throne, and judged. The sacred vestments were torn from it, three mouldering fingers were cut from the right hand, and the corpse was thrown contemptuously into the Tiber. No one questions these statements of the Bishop of Cremona, Liutprand, in his *Antapodosis* (i, 50).

In a very short time Pope Stephen quarrelled with Deacon Sergius and his other supporters. He was, as his own epitaph and a contemporary writer of high character (Flodoard) tell, thrown into a dungeon by them and strangled. Two Popes then occupy the throne for a few obscure weeks, and obscurely disappear. After them comes John IX, of the Formosan faction, and Sergius and his friends are again expelled and excommunicated. John dies in the year 900, and is for three years followed by the obscure

Benedict IV. At his death in 903—no one can tell how many of these Popes were murdered—Leo V comes out victor in the truculent fight for the highest spiritual office in Christendom, but after two months Leo is deposed by the priest Christopher, who flings him into prison and occupies his place. Christopher enjoys his ill-gotten honours only a few months, when the truculent Sergius fights his way into Rome at the head of Italian troops, deposes and imprisons the usurper, and attains the object of his long and criminal ambition.

Such is the bare chronicle of those stirring and repulsive years which the biographer of the Popes bequeaths us. Behind those few lines we can easily perceive a city and a Papacy in a state of utter degradation, and a few references in other trustworthy writers confirm our estimate. Sergius was a man utterly devoid of moral scruple. For nearly ten years he had fought for the Papacy; he was the leading spirit in the revolting trial of the corpse of Formosus; he snatched the Papal crown at the point of the sword. We can, therefore, well accept—and even Catholic writers like Duchesne accept—the assurance of the contemporary Bishop Liutprand that he had notorious immoral relations with one of the fastest women of the new Roman nobility—" the shameless whore " Marozia, as Cardinal Baronius calls her—and was the father of the later Pope John XI. We can have no just ground to hesitate to accept the statement of another contemporary writer, Vulgarius, that Sergius murdered, or caused the murder of, his two predecessors.[1] Yet Sergius is merely the first of many such men who will now enter the gallery of the Popes.

We know little in detail about the pontificate of Sergius, but the contemporary writers make it clear that under him began what some Catholic historians

[1] *De Causa Formosiana*, c. xiv.

have called "the rule of the courtesans"—that is to say, the control of the Papacy by women so promiscuously immoral and unscrupulous that the older Catholic historians freely call them "whores" (*scorta*). These were, principally, the young woman Marozia, to whom I have referred, and her mother Theodora, wife of one of the highest officers of the city. While Marozia was mistress of the reigning Pope, her mother had a *liaison* with the fascinating Bishop of Ravenna, and, when the brief reigns of Sergius's two successors were over, she and her husband secured the Papacy for this man (914).

John X was not of the truculent type of Sergius, but in passing from the bishopric of Ravenna to that of Rome he committed the same breach of the regulations as Formosus had done, and his relations with Theodora are described by Bishop Liutprand. In the end he quarrelled with Marozia, and he soon learned that "the rule of the courtesans" was a very real thing. Marozia and her latest lover were angry because John gave so much power and wealth to his brother Peter, and before long their men burst into the Lateran Palace and laid Peter dead at the feet of the Pope. They put John in prison, and he died soon afterwards. We can easily accept the assurance of some of the chroniclers that he was murdered.

In the next two years and a half two insignificant Popes occupied, and promptly vacated, the "Holy See"; and then, in 931, Marozia put her son (and son of Pope Sergius, as the *Liber Pontificalis* says) upon the Papal throne. He was a weak and negligible youth, and Marozia continued her wild career. When her husband was murdered she offered her hand and the throne of Italy to his brutal step-brother, Hugh of Provence, who had no scruple to accept. But Rome revolted against the unbridled couple, imprisoned the Pope, and put an end to the rule of Marozia. It was her own illegitimate son Alberic

who led the revolt, and this worthy son took over his mother's power and nominated the succeeding Popes.

Alberic left this power, in 953, to a still more disreputable son, Octavian, and this last representative of the remarkable dynasty dragged the Papacy to the lowest depth. In 955 he resolved, as the Roman See fell vacant, to unite the temporal and spiritual powers in his own person, and he ascended the Papal throne under the assumed name of John XII. There was not a crime in the penitentials that John XII did not introduce into the "sacred palace." The palace of Caligula or of Nero in ancient Rome had not witnessed more wanton scenes than the Lateran Palace now exhibited. Liutprand tells us (*De Rebus Gestis Othonis*, iv) how John, pressed by a rival, appealed to the Emperor Otto, and when Otto came to Rome the Romans brought up against their spiritual father a list of crimes which would, they said, "make a comedian blush for shame"; and a comedian was the lowest thing they knew. The Romans were lenient, as we have seen, but they could not tolerate a Pope who committed murder, perjury, adultery, incest (with his two sisters), rape, and sacrilege. Before the synod convoked by Otto it was proved that John had "turned the Lateran Palace into a brothel," cut out the eyes of or castrated those who criticised him, raped girls and women who came to pray in St. Peter's, gambled, cursed, drunk to the devil. . . . There was, in brief, nothing that he had not done.

John had fled to Tivoli, and with cool assurance he wrote to excommunicate the whole synod! The clergy and the Emperor deposed him and elected Leo VIII (963). But the Romans could never long endure the presence of a German ruler, and their surly conduct soon drove out Otto. We are told that John's agents distributed money freely, and that all the courtesans in Rome—a very large body—

were assiduous in his cause (Liutprand, xvii and xviii). The Romans, at all events, flung out Leo, and welcomed their "legitimate" and remarkable pontiff to the chair of Peter once more. After a few weeks spent in cutting off the noses and tongues of his critics, John turned again to his gay ways. But he died three months after his return. Tradition said that he was struck dead by the devil while he was paying his attentions to a married woman in an obscure part of Rome. But we wonder what grudge the devil had against him, and we should not err much, probably, if we attributed the violent death of this "divinely inspired" successor of Nicholas I to the knife of a jealous husband.

Rome still rejected the Emperor's Pope, Leo VIII, and elected Benedict V; but Otto returned, and under his protection Leo made a truculent end of the usurper and his followers. Under Leo's successor Rome again rebelled, and set up a democratic and secular government. It is remarkable that all through these centuries Rome, the city of the Popes, was the most anti-Papal and most democratic city in Europe. Once more the revolt was terribly punished. Under Benedict VI, a nominee of the Imperialists, the Emperor Otto died, and again Rome swarmed angrily to the attack. In the confusion Cardinal Bonifazio Francone imprisoned the Pope, had him strangled in his dungeon, and seized the Papacy.

Gerbert, who tells us of the murder, describes Boniface as "a horrid monster surpassing all other mortals in wickedness"; and he must have known the recent Papal record set up by Pope John XII. The Germans returned, however, and Boniface VIII fled to Constantinople with all the Papal treasures that he could conveniently convey. His successor enjoyed nine comparatively tranquil years under the protection of the Emperor, and in 983 gave way to John XIV. In that year the Emperor died, and

Boniface swooped like a hawk from the eastern sky. Again he imprisoned and murdered his victim, and removed a few eyes from their sockets. But he was more Greek than Roman, and in a year's time he also met a sudden death, and his body was dragged through the streets of Rome.

His successor, John XV, a greedy and corrupt man, was driven from Rome in the tenth year of his pontificate. John's successor, Gregory V, was too virtuous for the Romans, who liked a golden mean, and was expelled; and when the Emperor returned to restore him to the throne, on which the Romans had placed a John XVI, that unhappy intruder lost his eyes, his nose, his ears, and his tongue, and was driven through Rome with his face to his ass's tail. It remains to add that the restored, and pious, Gregory V died within a year, under the suspicion of poison, which does not surprise us after the savage deeds upon the Romans of his imperial protector.

If I seem to trip murders and revolts lightly from the pen, to compress whole periods of tragedy into a few cold lines, the reader must blame the scanty chronicles of that illiterate age. Vice and crime become so monotonous that contemporaries dilate on them only when they assume the heroic forms adopted by John XII. It was "the Iron Age." Where the "Holy Spirit" was let Catholic Truth discover; and let it cease to tell its clients, with an air of liberality, that there were "a few bad Popes," and then forbid them to read non-Catholic writers.

The German Emperors, semi-civilized rulers who slit noses and tongues as freely as they made love, were nevertheless eager to "purify" the Papacy. In Germany, as in every other country, the bishops and archbishops, the priests and monks and nuns, cultivated a comprehensive immorality. Sermons and letters and synodal discussions of the time offer us a picture of general and appalling licence. Otto

III, however, was still minded to have a good Pope, and he put upon the throne that remarkable scholar Gerbert, who for four short years so dazed the Romans that he died, in their opinion, in a strong odour of sulphur.

After his death (1003) a new power, the Counts of Tusculum, gradually overshadowed and appropriated the Papacy, and the long night approached its darkest hour. After vigorous fights with the Romans one of the counts secured the tiara and the title of Benedict VIII. He fiercely suppressed the riots of the Romans, and, strange to say, for he was quite unscrupulous, attempted some reform of the Church. At his death his brother purchased the votes of the electors, and succeeded him. John XIX soberly enjoyed his purchase for nine years. Then a member of the family, by the customary bribery, bought the tiara for his own son, a boy of eleven, and the Papal record is stained with the fifteen years' pontificate of Benedict IX.

Benedict's particular vices have not earned immortality. "They were so horrible that I shudder to tell them," says one of his successors, Victor II (*Dialogues*, Bk. iii). Rudolph Glaber (*Historia*, v, 5) makes the same remark about "the turpitude of his [the Pope's] life and conversation." Bishop Bonitho (*Liber ad Amicum*, v) is content to mention "adulteries and murders." We gather that unnatural vice, which was then very prevalent in the Church, was the most flagrant offence of the young Pope. He was assuredly one of the "few bad Popes."

In the first year of his reign the Romans plotted against the young Pope's life, and he fled. In 1037 he induced the Emperor Conrad to restore him, and he enlivened the Lateran Palace for seven years. Then the Romans again fell furiously upon his supporters, and, while they spattered Rome with blood in the traditional manner, the young Pope went

courting a cousin in the provinces. He was recalled by his relatives, who bloodily crushed the Romans and their anti-Pope; but his thoughts were with his pretty cousin, and in the next year he sold the Papacy to his uncle (for the annual Peter's Pence which was to come from pious England) and decided to wed his lover.

The uncle, John Gratian, was a highly respectable ecclesiastic, with large ideas of reform, and not a little ambition. He assumed the name of Victor III, and took his seat as Vicar of Christ. In another part of Rome sat the rival Vicar, the anti-Pope made by the Romans, Silvester II. In fine, Benedict IX failed to get his bride, and he returned and set up a third "chair of Peter." He held the Lateran Palace; Silvester occupied St. Peter's and the Vatican Palace (which now begins to find mention); Victor III had to be content with Sta. Maria Maggiore. To finish with the long history of this phase of Papal degradation, the pious new Emperor of Germany, Henry III, came to Rome, cleared out the three of them, and set Pope Clement II, an austere and virtuous prelate, upon the defiled and despised throne of the rulers of Papal Christendom—the "Holy See."

Chapter IV

THE PAPACY AT ITS HEIGHT

In the preceding three chapters I have described a thousand years of Papal history: a thousand years since, according to the Roman tradition, Peter had brought his special inspiration to Rome and inaugurated a "divinely inspired" series of pontiffs. What a millennium it was that he initiated! It began in the relative culture and prosperity of the best days of the Roman Empire; it ended in the dense darkness and misery of the early Middle Ages. The series of pontiffs includes 150 Popes in the thousand years. How many of them were great men? How many of them were of a character to accord with their pretensions? How many of them were corrupt? Where was the promised Holy Spirit during whole centuries of the millennium?

We now enter upon what we must describe as, in many respects, a better period of Papal history.

But with the comparative disappearance of gross vice and crime there reappears what one is tempted to call the spiritual criminality of the good Popes. We cannot, and have no wish to, question the motives of these sincerely religious Popes, but any historian must recognize the profound human evil of much of their work and the pitiful casuistry to which even the greatest of them stooped. The forgers return, and are employed by Popes like Hildebrand. Ambition of the spiritual sort returns, and, working upon a densely ignorant age, builds up a power that, passing to more corrupt men, causes shameful abuses Ascetic

Popes fasten celibacy upon their clergy, and human nature takes a fearful revenge. Swords still fly on all sides, and the best of the Popes set them about their bloody work in the interest of the Papacy. Enlightenment begins to dawn upon Europe from Moorish Spain, and the Popes set up Inquisitions and drown whole populations in blood. And all the time Europe is sodden with gross superstitions—with spurious relics, and magical cures for disease, and appalling travesties of justice, and mechanical rites instead of real morality—and no "divinely inspired" Pope opens his lips in protest.

The early German Popes introduced by Henry, whom the malaria of Italy or the poison of Rome removed in quick succession, need not detain us. The short series culminated in the election of the famous Hildebrand, or Gregory VII, who embodies in his rugged personality all the virtues and vices of the reformers.

He was from the first a rough and violent peasant, enlisting his brute strength in the service of the monastic ideal which he embraced In the north of Italy a bishop began a campaign against the marriage of the clergy, and soon a wild mob, armed with staves, went from church to church dislodging the married priests and pouring filthy abuse upon them and their families It must be remembered that there was as yet no rigorous law of the Church forbidding priestly marriage There were old decrees by Popes, but long-standing custom had set them aside The monks were generally immoral, and the secular priests nearly as bad, but a very large proportion of the priests were legally married, even in Rome Hildebrand rushed into the fray with his fanatical monk-colleague, Peter Damian, who could sling invectives like a Neapolitan fisher Peter wrote a book about the morals of the clergy and the monks, significantly called *The Book of*

Gomorrah, and presented it to the Pope. It is a terrible picture of monastic, priestly, and episcopal vice, chiefly unnatural vice; and the state of things it describes certainly merited a campaign. But the real remedy was decent marriage for all, and against this Peter and Hildebrand, and half a dozen other firebrands, led the staff-armed mobs and the imperial troops. When Hildebrand became Pope they won. They imposed the theory of celibacy upon the Church; and the sequel had better be read in Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy* (or Sacerdotal Vice) by any who is not familiar with it, or cannot imagine it.

There was hardly a country in Europe which Gregory did not try to annex to Rome. All the kingdoms of Spain belonged to the Papacy, he said; and other monarchs who had innocently accepted "blessed banners" found that their kingdoms were subject to Rome and owed vassalage in men and money. He claimed Hungary. He threatened to annex France. The United States of Europe, under the control of the Papacy, was Gregory's supreme ideal. Not that he had the least idea of pacifying Europe, on the modern plan. He set swords flying, and flung out threats of war, on the slightest provocation. Armies were the Lord's appointed instruments for making kings "obedient." He claimed the right to interfere in any concern, secular or spiritual, of any country of Europe. "If the Pope is supreme in spiritual things," he naïvely said, "he had all the greater right to intervene in the smaller matters which are called temporal." And, ignorant as Gregory was, he must have had some knowledge of the fact that his most active assistants—such as Bishop Bonitho, Bishop Anselm, and Cardinal Deusdedit—used and perpetrated forgeries in establishing his credentials.

Gregory "deposed" Henry IV—a new power of the Papacy, which Gregory partly uses forgeries to

establish (*Epp.* viii, 21)—and Henry retorted by charging the Pope with various misdeeds, including suspicious intercourse with the Countess Mathilda! The Catholic writer tells that Gregory won; that the spiritual had a great triumph over the material; that the proud monarch knelt as a penitent in the snow outside the gates of the Castle of Cannossa and begged absolution. This picture is taken from the monkish chronicle of Lambert of Hersfeld, which has been heavily discredited. That Henry went through the form of penance I believe, though it is disputed. But it was merely a political stratagem. The moment Henry left Cannossa he resumed the fight, and, after years of struggle, *he won.* Gregory's brutal Normans so enraged the Romans by their rapes and pillage, that they drove Gregory out; and the Pope died, exiled from his own city by his own people for the crimes of his chosen instruments.

Let me add that Gregory VII strove just as earnestly, in the intervals of his political struggles, to reform Rome and the Church. One little glimpse of the state of things will suffice. His admirer, Bishop Bonitho, tells us (*Ad Amicum*, vii) of a quaint reform he made in St. Peter's. It appears that "sixty or more" laymen, dressed like priests and capped with mitres, were accustomed to control the church. It was an "old custom." They represented to ignorant pilgrims that they were cardinals, and they promised prayers in return for money. These venerable rogues all had wives or mistresses, says the bishop, yet at night they used to rape or seduce the women-pilgrims who often slept in St. Peter's. Gregory had great difficulty in evicting them.

Violence begets violence, Gregory's friend Abbot Didier gently complained to him; and when that worthy man found himself, against his will, appointed to succeed Gregory (in 1087) he realized the truth of his own words. The Imperialists ejected him

and the troops of the tender Mathilda, and set up an anti-Pope. The Papalists summoned the Normans, and Rome swam with blood. On the eve of the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul there was a furious battle for St. Peter's. Each troop was resolved that its particular Vicar of Christ should say mass at the great altar, but the battle was indecisive, and on the solemn day the church lay, silent and blood-spattered, between the rival camps. Pope Victor died heart-broken in the middle of the carnage.

The anti-Pope held Rome for six years, and the new Pope, Urban II, had, at his return from exile in 1093, to borrow money to pay for a lodging in the city. The Vatican and Lateran palaces were ruined. The Papacy, to its great grief, almost returned to the poverty of Christ. Under Paschal II, the next Pope, the Imperialists set up three anti-Popes, and the state of Rome was chronic bloodletting. Paschal's men captured one of the pretenders, and he was brought on an ass, his face to the tail, to the Lateran Palace.

Such was the Rome of "the ages of faith" and after its "reform." And after nearly a century of bitter strife and bloodshed over the right of investiture, it was settled by a little human wisdom and moderation, a reasonable compromise, in the Concordat of Worms (1122). The "divine inspiration" had not acted well.

But the Papacy had hardly emerged from this struggle, or reached a pause in the struggle with the Emperors, before it plunged into another, and less reputable, conflict.

The beginning of the quarrel with the Empire is told in one of those quaint chapters of medieval history which bring a smile to the lips of the historian when he hears Catholics speak of their divinely-guided Papacy and the divinely-illumined elections of Popes.

In the year 1160 Alexander III received the votes of the electors, and, in time-honoured language, he protested that he was unworthy. "Very good," said Cardinal Octavian, who stood near; and he plucked the cope from the astonished Pope's shoulders. Two other cardinals of the imperialist school at once proposed Octavian for the Papacy. The cope was torn from his hand by an angry supporter of Alexander, but another cope was at hand. Octavian (now Pope Victor IV) put it on at first with the back to the front, and the rival party jeered. But the doors suddenly burst open, and a crowd of soldiers saluted the "true" Pope, Victor IV. Alexander, who quickly discovered his worthiness, hastily barricaded a house near St. Peter's, but he was evicted by his rival, and was compelled to fly to France. The Emperor Frederick supported Victor.

After five years Alexander, the unworthy, paved a way back to Rome with French gold. But he had scarcely a majority large enough for the tranquil exercise of his spiritual office, and he summoned a French army. The ensuing fight was one of the worst in the Papal annals; which is a high compliment to its earnestness. The floor of St. Peter's itself is described as "strewn with corpses," and many other churches were ruined. The Romans themselves drove Alexander from the ruins. He returned, and the gates of Rome were closed against him. But on a third attempt he negotiated peace, and for three years he more or less quietly enjoyed the tiara, for which he had amply proved his unworthiness. This was Rome after the "reforms" of Hildebrand.

Innocent III (1198–1216) was, in my opinion, the greatest of the Popes. He was a man of much strength of character, considerable ability, intense religious feeling, and very remarkable achievements.

Yet it is precisely in the life of this great Pope that we may study most clearly what I have called the spiritual criminality of the good Popes; the proof that the Papacy was not merely a pitifully human growth, but a profoundly mischievous institution, warping the finest characters, obstructing the progress of the race, maintaining Europe in anarchy and bloodshed.

He set about the regaining of the temporal power, for all the Papal territories were now occupied by German commanders or Italian nobles, and were incorporated in the Empire. This was one of Innocent's fundamental defects. His aim brought the Papacy once more into deadly conflict with the Emperors, and caused him to stoop to actions which we should call mean and treacherous. He first induced the invalid widow of Henry VI, who lived in Sicily, to make over that kingdom (and a very large annual sum) to the Papacy, in return for which he would look after the interests of her son, the boy-Emperor; and he then encouraged, and apparently financed, a French adventurer who came with a claim to it. As Frederick was very young, his uncle Philip of Swabia held the throne in Germany. Otto of Brunswick then raised a wholly baseless claim to it—it belonged to the Pope's ward—and, because the unscrupulous adventurer promised to be docile to the Church, Innocent blessed his claim, and told the Germans to submit to it. The German prelates angrily warned the Pope to mind his own business, and a very brutal civil war devastated Germany for seven years. It was a just punishment of the Pope that Otto, when he secured the crown, laughed at and defied him; and it is not strange to find that, as the Pope calmly changed once more and recognized the lawful heir, that prince turned out to be the most deadly opponent of the Papacy, the brilliant and sceptical Frederic II.

Innocent's relations with other monarchs are marked by the same shuffling compromise. The supreme thing, in the Pope's estimation, was the power of the Church, which meant, he said, the good of mankind; and in striving after that power he at times felt that such smaller matters as human honour and manliness might be disregarded. With that incomparable ruffian King John Lackland, of England, he maintained the most friendly and flattering relations as long as John was "obedient"—and paid his dues. The Pope made no indiscreet inquiry into the death of Prince Arthur; and, when John shamefully stole the betrothed of a French knight, the Pope imposed upon him only a ludicrously light penance. But when John refused to recognize Stephen Langton, whom Innocent imposed upon the English Church, he withered the land with an interdict, and invited Philip of France to invade and subdue his "Papal fief," England. When John submitted, and acknowledged that England and Ireland were vassals of the Papacy, Innocent strenuously supported him in his tyranny. The Pope denounced Magna Charta, the first democratic charter of Europe, as a "diabolical document," and bade the barons lay down their arms under penalty of excommunication.

In directing the Fourth Crusade his conduct was even worse. The Crusaders paid their passage by taking Zara from the Hungarians for the Venetians. The Pope excommunicated the Venetians, though the Venetians merely smiled (as they usually did at Papal curses), and the Crusaders took little practical notice of the censure. But when the Crusaders took Constantinople from the Greek Catholics, and committed the most appalling horrors in the city and its churches, soldiers and prostitutes rioting together with the sacred vessels of the altar, Innocent had not a word of reproof. It was only when they failed to

hand over to him the control of the Greek Church that he opened the flood-gates of his eloquence.

Finally, and worstly, the conduct of this great Pope in connection with the massacre of the Albigenses was at times revolting. I have examined the evidence elsewhere (*Crises in the History of the Papacy*), and need not repeat it. The abuses and corruption of Rome had begotten in Europe a drastic form of anti-papal heresy which had spread very widely in the south of France. When Raymond of Toulouse refused to coerce his subjects, who were deaf to legates and monks, Innocent began to handle his customary formidable weapons. When the angry nobles then killed the Pope's arrogant representative, Innocent declared a "crusade" against Raymond and his heretical subjects. No prince would join it, and it was a mighty rabble of adventurous nobles and soldiers, captained by bishops and monks, that gathered for the slaughter and pillage of the prosperous and industrious heretics. What Catholic writers like Belloc say about the "social danger" of their opinions is mendacious rubbish. Their character and conduct were high above the average of the Middle Ages.

Let us allow that Innocent was, on his own principles, right up to this point; though it was not very delicate to stipulate that Toulouse should be handed over as another fief of the "Holy See." But in the further course of events the Pope behaved disgracefully, on any principles. Raymond offered to submit, and the Pope (*Epp.* xi, 232) instructed his representatives to deal craftily with him and ensnare him. They deliberately goaded Raymond into revolt, and the bloody avalanche descended upon the people of Albi. For three years all the unspeakable horrors of medieval slaughter were perpetrated upon men, women, and children. Innocent himself sickened of the slaughter, and in 1213 cried

a halt. He suddenly recollected that Raymond had never been tried and found guilty, and that in any case the kingdom would belong to Raymond's sons. But the Pope yielded again to the ferocious and crafty abbots and bishops who led the crusade, and he let the massacre be consummated and the kingdom "annexed."

No one knows how many hundred thousand perished horribly in this campaign, which was directly due to the Pope's immoral instructions to his Legates. But the Papal Legate boasts that his men slew forty thousand men, women, and children in one town, and we know that he had an army of 200,000 at work for two years; yet so many heretics survived that a fresh army of 100,000 had to be hired to finish them. And, while the Pope devoted himself to such matters, Christendom was, as he himself repeatedly says, in a state of general and profound moral corruption, both in its laity, clergy, monks, and nuns.

Such was the greatest, one of the most sincerely religious, of the Popes. Such was the Papacy in the two hundred years of its supreme power. The jewels of the period are Gregory VII, who imposed the colossal blunder of celibacy on the clergy and initiated the terrible feud with the Emperors, and Innocent III, the hero of the Albigensian massacre and the Fourth Crusade (the most sordid adventure of the thirteenth century). Between the two lie that generally miserable series of brawlers whom I have described. Let us pass on.

Chapter V

DOWN THE SLOPE

We have reached the thirteenth century, which Catholic writers seem to propose as a shining model for the twentieth century. What art! What splendid trade unions (or guilds)! What beautiful saints, like Francis and Dominic! What—Mr. Chesterton would say—what jollity of life! Well, the thirteenth century was just as sordid, as murderous, as immoral, as filthy and vicious to live in, as the modern mind can possibly conceive. Its intellectual life was confined to a few thousand clerics, sterile in its subjects, cramped by the ecclesiastical authorities, and indebted to the Mohammedans for its existence. Its Francis and Dominic are just a proof that the older monastic orders were, as Cardinal de Vitry says, unfit for a decent man or woman to live in; and the new monastic bodies were corrupted within twenty years. Its jollity of life was accompanied by as free a use of the knife as you will find in the Malay Archipelago to-day, as free a use of alcohol as you will find among "civilized" savages, and as free an indulgence of sex impulses as you will find among monkeys; and it was overcast by such plagues, famines, diseases, wars, robberies, persecutions, and oppressions as you will now find nowhere else.

As to the art of the Middle Ages, the man who looks for its *inspiration* in Catholicism is as foolish as the man who fancies that men and women were then as refined, as free, or as virtuous as they are to-day. Such an artistic phase occurs in the adoles-

cence of nearly every strong nation. One might as well attribute Periclean art in Athens to the religion of the time, or Japanese art to Shintoism. One might as well claim that the great painters of the later Middle Ages, who lived in an atmosphere of utter irreligion and licence, were inspired by Catholicism. The art of the Middle Ages is just the bright side of its turbulent and primitive strength, its flush of hot blood in the spring-time of modern Europe. It was *employed* by the Church, and took on a religious aspect, simply because the wealth to employ it, and the objects to work upon, were mainly ecclesiastical. In a short time men built town halls as finely as cathedrals, and painted merchants or Venuses as superbly as Madonnas. The laity were getting rich.

One thing at least the Papacy ought, on its own principles, to have secured; that is to say, the observance of the virtue of chastity, which it regarded as supreme. But chastity had so long been rare in Europe, especially at Rome, that men had begun to call it an " angelic virtue," so a medieval writer says. The Papacy and clergy often denounced vice. We know its extraordinary prevalence among the clergy mainly from Papal letters, meetings of prelates, notes compiled by bishops about the state of their dioceses, and so on. It was just such as Boccaccio later describes it. The clergy owned brothels. The cities—even the Papal authorities at Rome—taxed the earnings of prostitutes. The morals and manners of the common folk were indescribable.[1]

Rome had other things to think of. The long war with the Emperors opened afresh. Frederic would not go to the Crusade when he was ordered—

[1] In two large works, *A History of the Popes* (1939) and *A History of Human Morals* (1930) I give the full evidence and authorities for all summary statements about morals made in this book.

to say nothing of his other misdeeds—and Gregory IX erupted anathemas. But Frederic had his partisans, and, while Gregory poured out his sonorous curses from the pulpit in St. Peter's, the congregation burst into furious counter-curses and drove the Pope from Rome. The Pope had violated one of the most sacred laws and invited princes to invade Frederic's territory while he was on Crusade. They did not want a new war. Gregory made peace with them and returned; and he celebrated his return by the new kind of Papal firework—the burning of a multitude of Roman heretics.

I have spoken of Saints Francis and Dominic. Of Francis, to whose fraternity, in its degenerate and ridiculous modern form, I once belonged, I speak nothing but respect and sympathy. Under the illusion of asceticism, which Popes fostered, he wore out his gentle soul; and he died of a broken heart, because his fraternity quickly went the way of all monastic flesh. But Dominic! The Dominican friars would do well, in modern times, to change their name. The fanaticism of their founder was more dangerous to others than to himself. He specialized on hatred of heretics, and his white-robed sons grimly stoked the fires of the Inquisition until the black-robed sons of St. Ignatius came to dispute the honour. How many tens of thousands —if we include Jews and Albigensians and other large sects, how many millions—were punished with horrible death or torture in the "glorious thirteenth century" and its two successors, no man knows; and in large part they were men and women like the noble Arnold of Brescia, too honourable to say that they believed in the divinity of the system under which they lived.

Catholic writers pretend that the Roman Inquisition at least did little of this slaughter. They know well that the figures have never been published.

Until the time of Leo XIII a large proportion of the documents treasured at the Vatican were kept in the "Secret Archives." As a good many of the skeletons in this cupboard (such as the legal proof of the immorality of Alexander VI) had got into the light of day, Leo XIII made a show of liberality and threw open the doors of the "Secret Archives" to the scholars of the world. But when even Catholic historians like Dr. Pastor [1] searched for the records of the Roman Inquisition, which had been kept there, they were not to be found. Behind the "Secret" (and now open) Archives is a collection of "Strictly Secret" documents of which Leo XIII said nothing to the scholars he invited!

A curious incident arose in 1292, and makes one smile again at the theory of "the light of the Holy Ghost." The rivals fought for a year, but not a cardinal could get the legal majority of votes. Some foolish cardinal then proposed, in despair, that they should elect a holy hermit who had a reputation among the country folk at the time, and the wearied voters agreed. The astonished and half-witted hermit thus found himself dragged from his cell and clothed with the jewelled garments of a Pope. But Celestine V was at once found to be utterly incapable, and he was compelled to abdicate. Chroniclers of the time tell a delightful story, which we cannot control, of the way it was done. One of the cardinals fitted a speaking-tube to the Pope's chamber, and poor Celestine found himself ordered by "a voice from heaven" during the night to abdicate.[2]

However that may be, the cardinal of this story took Celestine's place, became Boniface VIII, and confined the abortive Vicar in a place which ambitious courtiers could not reach. It is said, on very fair

[1] See his *History of the Popes.*

[2] See the full and extraordinary story of Celestine in Milman, Bk. XI, cc. vi and vii.

authority, that Boniface had the unhappy hermit murdered, when his own character became clear and men wanted to displace him. Boniface was certainly quite capable of the speaking-tube. He was utterly unscrupulous. After fierce quarrels with the Roman nobles he was himself deposed by the Romans and the French (in 1303), and the indictment of him is, as we shall see, appalling. He had fled to Anagni, and it is said that the fury into which he burst when he heard the news killed him.

The Papacy was now worth a sterner fight than ever. In 1300 the Pope had announced a "Jubilee"—a special year of indulgences and pardons for all who came to Rome—and the streams of ignorant men and women from all parts of Europe poured, even when the bandits and the courtesans had taxed them, such wealth into St. Peter's that the officials gathered up the coin with rakes and shovels. Further immense sums were made by selling relics (generally fraudulent) and other valuable objects to the pilgrims.

Every church and every cleric in Rome had his share, for the priceless relics of Rome were scattered among the churches. There was the pillar to which Christ had been tied, the nails and wood of his cross (all the material of which had been sold, in grains, a dozen times over), drops of his blood, the napkin—in short, everything down to his milk-teeth and his navel-cord. There was all the linen of Mary, and her wedding ring, and so on. There were locks of her hair, and little phials of her milk. Peter was gorgeously represented—down to the stone in which his tears of repentance had worn a groove—and his mother and sister contributed bones and articles of linen. Then there was the innumerable army of the saints and martyrs, spurious and otherwise. The Jews and Greeks had done a prodigious trade in relics which they had "discovered" in Palestine.

The Italians had not even needed to go to Palestine. The angels did the transporting for so pious a generation And it is fairly clear from the evidence brought against Boniface VIII that (as we shall see presently) he was a thorough blackguard, and despised those whom he duped and fleeced! He crowns the "glorious" century

Rome, which "never changes," has been unfortunate in losing all these interesting relics. Some even of the most curious, such as phials of the Virgin's milk and locks of her hair, lingered in obscure parts of Spain until the nineteenth century. It is tantalizing how they fly before the chemist and the osteologist. Perhaps the way in which one of the latter discovered the bones of a famous Neapolitan saint, which had worked countless miracles, to be the bones of a goat is not appreciated at the Vatican.

In 1304, after a furious and protracted quarrel of the French and Italian cardinals, the Archbishop of Bordeaux got the tiara, and became Clement V. Whether or no the French king had bribed the cardinals is disputed (by Catholics), and in point of fact the cardinals were unable to agree until the "voice of the people" broke upon the chamber in very angry tones. But that Clement V had an understanding with the French king cannot be seriously disputed. He refused to leave France; he was crowned at Lyons; he summoned the Papal court to him; and he at once began to oblige the king. He created ten new French cardinals, and he absolved King Philip (who was under a cloud), and granted him a tithe on the clergy for five years. Philip then pressed for the trial of the enormously wealthy Knights Templars. There is no doubt that this semi-monastic body was as corrupt as it was rich. Scott's Templar in *Ivanhoe* is a true picture. But the trial (which Milman describes at length in his *History of Latin Christianity*, Bk. XII, ch. i) was a

travesty of justice, and Clement winced. Philip pressed the weakling, and he put his signature to the condemnation.

But Philip had an even graver aim than the spoiling of the Templars, and Clement fled nervously to Avignon, which was then just outside France. Philip grimly pursued him, and demanded the trial of Pope Boniface VIII, his deadly enemy, the Pope of the Jubilee.

Clement was forced to hold a Consistory, and for days the most astounding evidence about Boniface was put before him. Boniface had been addicted to natural and unnatural vice, blasphemy, scepticism, simony, and all species of corruption. Now we cannot check this evidence. No torture was used (as it was freely used in the trial of the Templars), though one suspects the use of French gold. Yet the witnesses are of such a character (Roman canons, abbots, etc.) that we cannot admit more than exaggeration. The man at whose feet Christendom had grovelled in 1300 was stained with every vice, from pæderasty to murder! Clement shuddered at the prospect; and Philip, who happened to want another favour, released his pressure. He was satisfied with the exposure; and he gave Clement a hundred thousand gold florins. Later the Council of Vienne lamely, without trial or examination of witnesses, acquitted the shade of Pope Boniface.

Clement, a cowardly and worthless pontiff, died in 1314, leaving 300,000 gold florins to his nephew. His successor, John XXII, the most astute financier on the Papal throne until Leo XIII, maintained that Clement had given his nephew 1,774,800 gold florins (nearly a million sterling) of Papal money. And Clement had spent plenty. He lived in luxury, and in such freedom that it was commonly believed that the very charming Countess de Talleyrand-Périgord, who was constantly with him, was his

mistress.[1] It is useless to seek to determine whether she was or no He was a man of few scruples, and the rarest scruple of those days was chastity And all over Christendom heretics, mystics, and other protesters against this precious system blazed at the stake throughout Clement's reign.

Then came John XXII (1314–34), an aged lawyer who had helped to procure and arrange the evidence against the Templars. John was a dry little man, a keen accountant whose ledgers are preserved in the Vatican to this day

Being over seventy years of age, John's conduct is beyond reproach; though how the parsimonious little man contrived to spend £200,000 a year—£25,000 a year on his own household—is not clear. But John's ways of getting money were, for an "inspired" man, peculiar. The enterprising Boniface had already confiscated to the Papacy the revenue of any ecclesiastical office when the clerk who held it died in or near Rome John extended this profitable law to all dying clerics, and claimed three years' revenue from the successor.

At one moment this led to trouble which nearly cost him his life, and it prettily illustrates the times and the Papal court. John summoned a wicked bishop, Hugues Gérard, to account for his misdeeds, though the man had honestly paid his four hundred pounds for his office. In the middle of the trial servants of the bishop were caught smuggling into Avignon (in loaves of bread—John had good police) packets of poison and little wax images of the Pope and his nephew. In the Middle Ages, when you wanted to kill a man and leave no trace, you set up a wax image of him, and, uttering certain charms, prodded it with a bodkin Then he was supposed to die; and, curiously enough, the Pope's nephew did die (possibly of fright). Out came the instru-

[1] Villani, *Historia*, ix, 58.

ments of torture, and it was discovered that the images had been made for the bishop by a Jew and blessed by an archbishop on whose revenue John had designs! The poison was to supplement the charms, and even cardinals were implicated in the plot to use this. There was a bloody vengeance, and John issued fierce decrees against magic.[1]

The more piquant fact is that John's conduct led equally to the degradation of the Papacy—let us say, deeper degradation of the Papacy—and the growth of the protest against it. The usual futile struggle occurred at his death, and so many cardinals threw away their votes upon a monk whom everybody thought impossible that the surprised monk got the tiara. Clement did not live to solve the dilemma; and Benedict XII, who hated monks (but liked a glass of good wine and a good story), made a feeble and futile effort at reform. Benedict XII was the only really religious Pope of the century, but one of the epitaphs published at his death described him as "a Nero, death to the laity, a viper to the clergy, a liar, and a drunkard." To him succeeded the gay Clement VI (1342–52), whose taste had been cultivated in a Benedictine monastery. Avignon now rivalled any court in Europe for licence and gaiety.

The great palace which John XXII had begun was now complete, and round it, and along the beautiful banks of the river, were the palaces of the cardinals. In fact, Clement now, by a singular bargain, got Avignon as Papal property. It belonged to the kingdom of Naples, and Queen Joanna had lately murdered her husband and married her lover; and as her husband's kinsman, the King of Hungary, sought her life, she penitently submitted her fault to the Pope. She got absolution; and the Pope got Avignon for a beggarly 80,000 florins. "Catholic

[1] See a full and critical account of this matter in E. Abbe's *Hugues Gérard* (1904).

Truth," of course, admits no connection between the two transactions, though the sale immediately preceded the absolution! Joanna repented her bargain and protested; but the Popes kept Avignon until Napoleon came upon the scene.

Whether the Countess of Turenne was really Clement's mistress, as Villani says, and what precise proportion of the cardinals lived loosely, it would be futile to seek to determine. It is enough that Petrarch, who lived near Avignon, repeatedly describes it in his letters as " a sink of iniquity "; and Petrarch was not a Puritan. He was very hostile to Clement for refusing to leave his comfortable palace for Rome, as Rome demanded; but the constant and detailed statements in his letters leave no room for doubt. The licence of life among the clerics at Avignon was as great as (later) at the court of Louis XIV, with the addition of unnatural vice, which was prevalent everywhere. Ordinary vice was so little regarded that the Popes taxed and protected prostitutes, and convents and monasteries owned brothels. Bishops and cardinals had hundreds of pages and servants each. They kept their dogs and falcons; and hundreds of charming ladies joined their superb banquets and hunts and their heavy gambling. The " Holy Father " mingled with, and smiled upon, all this gaiety; such gaiety that Petrarch, who knew well the story of Rome and Greece, has to go back to Babylon for a parallel. And the sons of St. Dominic plied their unspeakable tortures, and induced civic authorities to light the flames (lest they should stain their own white hands) for critics all over Europe.

Clement's successor drove away crowds of the idle and vicious inferior clergy who fattened at Avignon; but the great plague, the corruption of the cardinals who controlled the Papacy, continued. The next Pope also was a good, but weak, man; and he trans-

ferred the Papal Court, in 1367, from its atmosphere of vice and luxury to Rome. Catholic writers offer us a pretty picture of a saintly maid of Siena inducing him to return. The truth is that the Papacy had reports that it was in danger of losing Italy if it remained in France. Rome had become a dreary, grass-grown waste: the mouldering corpse of the greatest city the world had ever known. The diversion of Papal gold for sixty years had ruined it. But its people had still such independence of spirit that Urban V returned to Avignon. His successor went to Rome, though the horrible conduct of his legates and troops in Italy raised such a storm that he also prepared to fly. He died in 1376, and a new and extraordinary phase of Papal history opened.

Chapter VI

THE PAPACY IN THE DEPTHS

The Catholic theory is that God, for his inscrutable reasons—this is said in low and reverential tones—permitted the Papacy to contract a stain at times from the age in which it lived.

The plain historical truth is very different. It is that the Papacy was set up in a relatively decent and enlightened world, and under the rule of the Pope this world sank into appalling depths, dragging the Papacy with it. That is the story of the first thousand years of the Papacy. And the story of the next five hundred years is still more remarkable, on Catholic principles. It is that Europe, in spite of the Popes, grew slowly out of its ignorance and barbarism, *and the Papacy continued to sink.*

The rebirth of Europe is too often dated from what is called the Renaissance in the fifteenth century. There was, of course, a quicker growth of culture in the fifteenth century, but the rebirth of civilization had begun much earlier. The artistic flush to which I have referred: the school-life inspired by the Moors; the emancipation of the serfs and growth of free towns; the settlement of the new nations; the restoration of commerce—all these things, with which the Papacy had nothing to do, were improving Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There was a continuous growth of heresy, of angry or contemptuous protest against the Papacy; but the Popes were still strong enough to quench it in blood. The spread of a zeal for ancient Greece

and Rome in the fifteenth century greatly stimulated the advance, especially as the laity now took up culture and the practice of law. Let us see how the Papacy behaved while Europe improved.

At the first Papal election in Rome after the return the French and Italian cardinals fought as men may in a political ward of a minor South American Republic, while a mob of Romans howled through the windows, and even burst into the room. The "Holy Ghost" had not much chance, and a rough Neapolitan monk, Urban VI, was hastily elected. He was a pious man, but his manners were not at the Avignon level; and the luxurious French cardinals, whose ways he described in the rich Neapolitan dialect, chose another Pope, Clement VII, and retired with him to Avignon. It was the opening of the "Great Schism." For thirty years Christendom was hopelessly puzzled as to which of the rival anathematizers, both of whom seemed to be fluent and expert, really had "the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Both were men of vile character. We have for this period a witness of exceptionally good character for such an age, and the sophistry of Papal historians like Father Mann about his evidence is ludicrous. Dietrich of Neim was a clerical lawyer and member of the Pope's suite: a man, in other words, of special information and ability. He wrote a Latin work *On the Schism*, and it shows that after four centuries of "reforms," and in spite of the progress of secular Europe, the character of the Papal Court was almost as gross as it had been during the Rule of the Whores. One of the rival Popes, Clement VII, had as cardinal led the Papal troops in person, and he had on one occasion set them to butcher every man, woman, and child in the city of Cesena. Both Popes had armies, and they raped, stole, and murdered and mutilated civilians without restraint.

But the supposedly "genuine" Pope, Urban VI,

who held Rome, was even worse. He said nothing when his favourite nephew tore nuns from their convents—rather, he loaded the nephew with wealth and honours—and he raised funds to fight his rival by the most scandalous means. Driven out of Naples for his crimes, the Pope had a number of the leading cardinals tortured in his castle, while he read his breviary under the window, and, being forced by the Neapolitans to fly for his life, he dragged the cardinals with him and, according to most contemporary writers, had all but one murdered. He was himself, it appears, poisoned by the Romans; and the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, which glosses over these matters in the article on him, remarks that he "might have been a good Pope in more peaceful circumstances." Nor is "Catholic Truth" more candid about Urban's successor, Boniface IX, who carried simony (traffic in sacred things), dishonesty, and nepotism to the lowest depths. Rome reeked with vice and violence, even ladies of noble rank who came for the Jubilee of 1400 being raped and robbed.

But a still greater humiliation was preparing for "the Holy See," which was now reviled and ridiculed in ribald songs from one end of Europe to the other. Boniface in his sordid greed—he discussed money matters with his secretaries at the altar—had promoted to high office an utterly unscrupulous Neapolitan pirate or irregular soldier, Baldassare Cossa, who perfected the fiscal machinery of John XXII. It will be remembered that John had declared all ecclesiastical appointments forfeit to the Holy See when the holders died. Boniface and his enterprising Chamberlain improved upon this. They had agents watching the age and health of incumbents, and they set up a market of "expectations," in their own elegant phrase. The highest clerical bidder was put on the list. But Cossa had the brilliant idea of also selling "preferences." A man who had paid for the

" expectation " of the parish of, say, Montefeltro might find, when the incumbent died, that it had been sold for a larger sum to someone who had secured a " preference."

The " taxes " on dispensations, etc. continued; and we now find clearer evidence of the practice of selling indulgences. People in distant countries said that the journey to Rome for the Jubilee was ruinously expensive, the route being lined with beggars and thieves and courtesans right up to the altars of St. Peter's. At all events, the Pope or Baldassare imagined them saying this; and, in order that Italians should not be unduly favoured in the Holy Father's family, it was decreed that any who paid to Papal agents *the price of a journey to Rome* should obtain the same pardons as if he visited Rome.

Here " Catholic Truth " makes a dignified protest. It is a sheer libel, we are told, that the Church *sold* anything; and it is a worse libel to say that it sold *pardon for sins*. On the first point the reader may take it as he pleases. You pay your money—you may still do it in South America—to the priest or shopkeeper, you get your change, and you get a piece of paper assuring you of an " indulgence." Any person is free to call this " giving an alms to the Church and receiving gratuitously a spiritual benefit "; but—no alms, no benefit, and the sum is strictly stipulated. We need not waste time in quarrels about words. In Canada you may give a man money and receive a drink; and as he is very earnest that it is not a " sale," but a free " gift " on both sides, you courteously acquiesce. As to the second point, whatever is done now (which we will discuss later), we have the solemn declaration of the Council of Constance, which I will give presently, that Cossa " sold " absolution from " sin " as well as from the purgatorial punishment of sin (*a pœna et*

culpa). The Council is rude enough to call it a "sale." Still ruder people call it a "sell."

Boniface's successor, Innocent VII, continued to have trouble with the Romans, who maintained their protest against the temporal power, and he had to fly to Viterbo. His nephew had killed some of the Romans. At the next Conclave the cardinals were resolved to end the scandalous and (for Rome) very unprofitable schism. Half the countries of Europe sent their "gifts" to Avignon. So they elected Gregory XII, an aged and venerable man, who protested with tears rolling down his cheeks that he would go on foot, if it were necessary, to meet the anti-Pope, Benedict XIII, and end the schism. But all the force in Church and State could not compel the two greedy old men to approach within less than twenty miles of each other. Gregory was the worst offender. So a number of prelates met in Council at Pisa, deposed the two, and elected Alexander V. Then there were three Vicars of Christ instead of two, as the ancient reprobates stubbornly refused to yield.

Alexander died at once, and Baldassare Cossa secured the tiara, and added fresh lustre to the name of John. He became John XXIII. Cossa had, in nursing the finances for Boniface, created a vast fortune for himself, and money had long counted in a Papal election. But I will be content in the case of John to say only what the distinguished Council of Constance said of him. Sigismund of Hungary took in hand the matter of the schism, compelled John to lay aside his tergiversations, and summoned a great Council of the Church at Constance. There were 29 cardinals, 183 archbishops and bishops, 134 abbots, 100 learned doctors of law and divinity, and—the chroniclers of the time tell us—about a thousand prostitutes attracted to Constance for the trial of the three Popes. It began in the early

days of 1415; and John, who at once saw the issue, fled ignominiously across Austria.[1]

This grave and representative assembly gathered evidence and drew up an indictment of John XXIII, which any person who knows Latin may read in Labbe's collection of the Councils. There were fifty-four articles in the charge, but I must summarize. The Holy Father was described as "wicked, irreverent, unchaste, a liar, disobedient, and infected with many vices." When we read the pages of details we rather think that it would have been simpler to name the vices, if there are any, which did not infect him. He amassed an immense fortune by simony, and therewith he bought the cardinalate. As cardinal-legate at Bologna he was "inhuman, unjust, and cruel." He got the Papacy by "violence and fraud," though he ridiculed and ignored the offices, fasts, etc. of the Church. As Pope he was an "oppressor of the poor, persecutor of justice, pillar of the wicked, statue of the simoniacs, addicted to magic, the dregs of vice . . . wholly given to sleep and carnal desires, a mirror of infamy, a profound inventor of every kind of wickedness." He sold benefices, bulls, sacraments, indulgences ("from sin and punishment"), ordinations, consecrations—in short, anything that would fetch money. He practised "sacrilege, adultery, murder, spoliation, rape, and theft." And so on. We may take it that the writers of the time, such as Dietrich of Niem, correctly describe the Holy Father: a man of unbounded sexual licence, ferocious cruelty, a bandit all his life, utterly irreligious, absolutely devoid of moral scruple.

The three Popes were deposed, and the gift of the Holy Ghost passed to Martin V, who was to co-operate with the Council in reforming the Church, and call other Councils every few years to see that

[1] See the scholarly and quite impartial work of E. J. Kitts, *In the Days of the Councils* (1908).

the reform was maintained. But when Martin secured the tiara he dissolved the Council before its reforming zeal became dangerous; and, though he summoned another at Pavia in 1423, he stifled that in its cradle. There was no reform. "Greed reigns supreme in the Roman Court," wrote the representative of the Teutonic Knights to his superiors in 1430.[1] The Church, especially in Germany, seethed with revolt. But Martin was busy regaining the temporal power and adorning Rome.

Martin and his two successors, Eugenius and Nicholas, had been fairly decent men who merely declined to attempt the awful task of cleansing the Augean stables of the Church and reducing its income. At the death of Nicholas a sinister development began. The Italian cardinals, having tired themselves with the customary furious and inconclusive struggle, carelessly handed the tiara to a Spanish bishop who seemed very inoffensive. But his name was Alfonso Borgia, and he planted the Borgia brood in Italy.

Calixtus III, as he was called, was quite pious, as piety went in those days. He was very assiduous at prayer, and he no doubt would like to see the Church better, if the reform did not cost much. But he was very fond of his kindred, and hosts of Spaniards crossed the sea and found office. Among them was a nephew, Rodrigo Borgia, whom Calixtus had for some years been educating for the Church. In a later age families would put into the Church a son who had morals, but no wit; in the fifteenth century it was the son who had wit and no morals. The

[1] Quoted by the Catholic historian Dr. L. Pastor in his *History of the Papacy* (I, 241). Songs were sung about it all over Europe for centuries. The Emperor Sigismund, who had undertaken the reform of the Church, was himself grossly immoral. There was, in fact, hardly such a thing in Europe as sexual morality in what is called the later and better part of the Middle Ages.

Church provided him with an income. The morals of Rodrigo (and most of the other young Spaniards) did not exist, but his uncle at once made him a cardinal and Vice-Chancellor (or head) of the Papal Court. In the same year, 1457, the Diet of Frankfort was drawing up an indictment of the Papacy which might have been copied from the indictment of John XXIII.

At the death of Calixtus the furious Romans scattered or murdered the Spaniards, but Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia survived. The new Pope, Pius II, had been a notorious rake in his earlier days, though he was now old and gouty and virtuous. But Rodrigo had turned into his pockets very profitable benefices, and the Pope merely sent the Spanish cardinal on an honourable mission to Siena. It is true that in 1460 he had to write Rodrigo a very severe letter,[1] because he and other cardinals had created a scandal by having young women perform indecent dances before them. Pius ought to have known, and probably did know, that Cardinal Rodrigo now openly had a mistress, Vannozza dei Catanei, and their first child was born in that year. But nothing was done. It was an age when, in the words of Pius himself, "scarcely a single prince in Italy had been born in wedlock," and an official report said that "scarcely one priest in every thousand will be found chaste." Princes of the Church were not much better.

The futile Pius was followed by the futile Paul, who angered Rome so much that there was a conspiracy against his life. Then came Sixtus IV, another man of piety, a Franciscan friar, who, amid the rumbles of Europe, carried the degradation of the Papacy a long step further. He had a brother, three sisters, and fourteen nephews and nieces; and a golden

[1] Reproduced in Bishop Mathew's life of Alexander VI. The Latin text is in the *Annales Ecclesiastici* of Raynaldus, year 1460, No. 31.

shower fell upon these humble peasants and obscure friars.

The fundamental error of the Papacy at this time was the creation of a corrupt body of cardinals, and the Friar-Pope was one of the worst offenders. There is a contemporary writer, Infessura, who accuses Sixtus of unnatural vice and general unscrupulousness; but Infessura was one of the very anti-Papal Italians, and may be reproducing idle gossip. Some modern historians believe that two of the "nephews" the Pope promoted were his own illegitimate sons. But in this account of Papal history I avoid any disputable charges. The case against Sixtus is bad enough. Whatever his personal morals, he filled the college of cardinals with unworthy men, paying no regard whatever to their notorious vices. His nephews Giuliano della Rovere and Pietro Riario were at once brought from their monasteries and made cardinals. Both were notoriously immoral. Glancing over the list of Sixtus's other promotions, I see that he was also responsible for Cardinals Sanseverino (loose and worldly), Giovanni Cibo (the father of several illegitimate children), Venier (loose and luxurious), Ascanio Sforza (a great hunter and gambler, notoriously loose), Christoforo della Rovere (another loose nephew), Battista Orsini (whose mistresses were known to all Rome), and Savelli, Sclafenati, and Giovanni Colonna (all loose and worldly).

The sequel will show what the college of cardinals had become, but if any Catholic thinks that these men hid their vices from the Pope, let him read the story of Sixtus's young nephew, Pietro Riario. Pietro was twenty-six when he was summoned from his friary to a cardinal's palace. Sixtus gave him bishoprics (including the archbishopric of Florence) and abbeys that yielded him £100,000 a year, and money was then worth five times as much as it now is, but

this did not suffice. His clothes were laden with gold; his favourite mistress Tiresia wore hundreds of pounds worth of pearls on her slippers alone; his banquets lasted hours. When he entertained Leonora of Naples in 1473 he built a superb palace for the day, and the banquet lasted six hours. All the fastest youths of Rome and all the choicest courtesans enlivened his wonderful palace, where there were several hundred silk-clad servants. He wore out his strength in two years and one month of this kind of life, spending £600,000 and leaving to the Pope a debt of £500,000; and, says the chronicler, "all Rome wept for him."

Sixtus followed his darling nephew in 1484, and Rodrigo Borgia and Giuliano della Rovere engaged in a spirited and expensive fight for the tiara. Each of them had several known illegitimate children, but that was no obstacle. Indeed, when they found that their division of forces was letting in a respectable cardinal, they united and got the tiara for Innocent VIII, who had two illegitimate children.

There is in this no ground for alarm, say Catholic writers, because the children were born before "Innocent" became a priest. In view of his advanced age —he was already almost in senile decay—we can readily admit that during his pontificate he did not add to his family; but to attempt to whitewash such a man is monstrous. With the awful example of his predecessor before his eyes, he nevertheless entered at once upon the promotion of his kindred and the creation of questionable cardinals. His son Franceschetto had no leaning to the Church, but he was enormously enriched out of Papal money, and he quickly became the most dissolute rake in Rome. Hundreds of thousands of dollars changed hands in a night when he and the fast cardinals were at cards or dice. When his eye fell upon a woman she was not safe in her house at night. His servants forced

the doors for " the Pope's son." The Vice-Chancellor (responsible for order and justice) was his friend Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, who shared with Franceschetto the bribes he got from criminals.

Innocent tolerated all this without protest for five years, until he died. His moral delicacy and feeling of remorse were such that he encouraged his son and his daughter Theodorina to lead Roman society, and in 1488 he married his grand-daughter Perretta in the Vatican. Two cardinals and a number of prelates attended the festivity with him in the " sacred palace." He left the rule of the Church to Giuliano della Rovere, who had three known daughters and was currently accused by the chief nobles of Rome of unnatural vice, and of the city to Rodrigo Borgia, whose mistress and children lived openly a few yards from the Chancellory. His capacity and dignity were such that, when the Roman nobles had their inevitable quarrel with him, one of them threatened to throw him into the river.

Then there was the affair of Prince Jem. The Sultan's younger brother had taken refuge with the Knights of St. John, and was kept prisoner in France. Innocent learned that the Sultan paid the knights £20,000 a year to keep the youth out of the East, and he felt that Rome was the proper place for such a captive. He gave the Grand Master a cardinal's hat—for general merit, of course—and lodged Prince Jem in oriental luxury and comfort in the Vatican. In Rome Jem could select from a harem of 6,800 courtesans. It was dangerous, however, as the Sultan then sent a renegade Christian to poison the Vatican well; but Innocent discovered the plot, and had the man's flesh torn from his bones with red-hot pincers.

Then the Sultan affected a very edifying friendship for the head of the sister-religion, and there were amiable letters; though Innocent was supposed until this time to be planning a new crusade against the

Turks. The Sultan sent to Rome the spear with which Longinus had pierced the side of Christ. The Master of Ceremonies of the Vatican, John Burchard, tells us in his *Diary* (May 4, 1492) that the Pope ordered the cardinals to arrange a grand reception of the relic; but the French cardinals swore that the real spear of Longinus had long existed in the royal chapel at Paris, and the German cardinals heatedly protested that the genuine spear was, and had been for centuries, at Nuremberg. We know that they were quite correct, and the "relic" was a gross fabrication. But Innocent placidly silenced them all, and the relic was put with great honour in the church!

The reader may be surprised to hear that almost all the facts given in this chapter are also given by the Catholic Dr. Pastor in his *History of the Popes*, where (and in my own history) the authorities are quoted. But I may illustrate how even the liberal Catholic scholar winces when the facts are too painful. Dr. Pastor, in his text (vol. v, p. 316), merely describes the gorgeous reception of the spear, and in a footnote he makes a vague reference to "*similar* relics preserved at Nuremberg and Paris." Burchard, whose authority on such a matter is unquestionable, is quite clear. Many relics of the Middle Ages existed in three or four editions, and rival cities fought bloody battles over them.

Innocent added other improper cardinals to the college—Lorenzo Cibo, his brother's illegitimate son, and Giovanni de Medici, a boy of fourteen—and went to his account. Then Rodrigo Borgia and Giuliano della Rovere, and their followers, joined issue in their third and last battle for the tiara. Rome was so excited that there were two hundred murders in a fortnight. Borgia won. He had the longer purse. He bribed fifteen out of the twenty-two cardinals. From Burchard's account of his

"gifts" I calculate that the tiara cost him about £600,000.[1]

The morals of Alexander VI are no longer discussed. They are described. Some of the older anti-Catholic writers erred in using uncritically the writings of his Neapolitan enemies, and found him "a monster of iniquity." They charge him with seducing a ward, incest with his daughter, countless murders, etc. I rely only on accepted documents, and leave these things open. We shall see that any Borgia was capable of anything. It is no use professing horrified incredulity. But the record is bad enough without straining evidence.

His two chief mistresses and six children are well known. The legal certificates referring to them are reproduced in the appendix to Thuasne's Burchard (Vol. III), and are summarized by Pastor and other Catholic writers. About the time of his election as "Vicar of Christ" he took a new mistress, Giulia Farnese, a golden-haired child of fifteen. She remained his mistress throughout his pontificate, from his fifty-eighth to his seventy-second year. She had a daughter Laura, who was regarded as, and apparently was (since she lived apart from her young husband, Orso Orsini, and with the Pope's daughter), Alexander's child.

In 1496, moreover, a mysterious "John Borgia" was born at Rome. There are reproduced (in the above writers) two legal certificates of his birth, the first describing him as the son of Cardinal Cesare Borgia and a married woman, the second describing

[1] Thuasne's edition of Burchard's *Diarium* (not translated) is enriched by useful notes, which confirm every point of importance. Except where Burchard confessedly reproduces gossip, his authority is very high. He was the chief official of the Vatican, and lived in it under Innocent, Alexander, and Julius. Thuasne, and to some extent Pastor, quote from unpublished documents (often in the Vatican), which make controversy superfluous.

him as son of the Pope and a married woman. Some historians have entertained the wild hypothesis that Alexander was obliging his son—easily the most immoral man in Rome—by assuming his misdeed. It is quite clear that, on the contrary, Cesare lent his name to hide what was really too infamous, even for Rome—a Pope of sixty-five begetting a son. I have no doubt that he was Giulia's son, and that the second certificate was to be produced, to protect the boy's rights, in the extreme contingency of Cesare ever becoming powerless to protect him.[1] We shall see that the Pope was grossly and openly immoral long after that date.

Alexander completed the degradation of the cardinals, and Rome now presented a spectacle that eclipses Avignon. Babylon ought not to be mentioned in this connection, as we have not the least ground to suppose that the religious leaders of Babylon, or of any other civilization, ever sank to such a depth as the "Holy Fathers." In defiance of a solemn promise, and for a total sum of about £50,000, Alexander created new cardinals. One was his illegitimate and supremely unscrupulous son Cesare; one was the immoral and scapegrace brother of his pretty young mistress—whom Rome promptly called "Il Cardinale della genella," or the Petticoat-Cardinal; a third was the handsome and dissolute boy (aged fifteen) Ippolito d'Este, who some years later had the eyes of his bastard brother cut out because his own mistress admired them. Later Alexander created a new batch of cardinals—"most of them of doubtful reputation," said the Venetian envoy (in Pastor, VI, 129)—at a price of £60,000.

[1] I have given a slightly romanticized picture of this period in a novel, *The Pope's Favourite*. Not a single *disreputable* incident in the story is invented. Indeed, it falls short of the truth, as the publishers requested me to omit the worst passages, which were strictly historical.

Of Alexander's duplicity in war and diplomacy nothing need be said. He extricated himself from the quarrel, and returned to his gay ways. The foreign ambassadors at Rome after 1496 constantly speak of new mistresses and sordid scenes in the Vatican. The baby John was, as I said, born in 1496. In the same year, we learn from the Diary of the distinguished Venetian Senator, Sanuto, outside Rome there was found a head on a pole with the inscription:—

> This is the head of my father-in-law, who prostituted his daughter to the Pope.

Worse things are said, but the evidence for these is not trustworthy. The state of Rome was, however, incredible Lucrezia, who was only fifteen, but already immoral, was married in the Vatican, in a gorgeous ceremony; and the Pope and cardinals and younger ladies caroused until after midnight, as Burchard tells us. Later the Pope, wanting a more powerful ally, dissolved her marriage. After she had conducted a *liaison* for some time with Cardinal Ippolito d'Este, the Pope married her to a Neapolitan prince, whom Cesare murdered when that alliance was no longer desired. The gaiety of the Vatican was further stimulated by the Pope's youngest son, Jofre, wedding and bringing to Rome a dissolute Neapolitan princess; by Cardinal Cesare's constant and exotic amours; and by summoning the Pope's second, and equally dissolute, son Juan from Spain. The Pope's magnificent rooms and the Vatican gardens shone day and night with licentious gaiety.

In 1497 Juan was murdered, and I am now disposed to agree with the historians who regard Cesare as the murderer of his brother. For a few months Alexander, who plainly suspected Cesare, was sobered, and ordered a reform of the Church. But within six months Cesare was living again in the

rooms above those of the Pope, and things went from bad to worse. The envoys to the "Holy See" mention repeatedly that Cesare is introducing notorious women in batches by night into the "sacred palace." What they did Burchard describes in a famous passage, which Thuasne (III, 167) shows to be confirmed by three good independent witnesses.

At the date of October 30, 1501, he notes in his *Diary* that the Pope did not attend Vespers, though it was Sunday and the Vigil of All Saints Day. But later in the evening Alexander and his daughter Lucrezia dined with Cesare and *fifty prostitutes* in Cesare's rooms in the Vatican. The women, after the banquet, danced unclothed. In one dance they had to flit, nude, between lighted candles and pick nuts from the floor. And this incredible, yet indisputable, scene ends with the "Vicar of Christ" and his daughter distributing prizes of silk garments to those servants of the Vatican who "had had carnal intercourse with the courtesans the largest number of times"! Burchard, we must remember, lived in the Vatican, and wrote this down in a diary which was "not meant for publication."

Considering Alexander's age and profession, and the fact that his most loved son had been foully murdered (probably by his cardinal brother) in the course of an amorous intrigue a few years before, one has to descend very low in the chronicle of man to find a parallel to the degradation of the Pope's later years. After this we need not gravely weigh the evidence for his incestuous relations with his daughter, or any other misdeed. I will add only that from vice he in the end turned to crime. He released his son from the cardinalate in order to marry a French princess and get the aid of France. He then followed with great enthusiasm, fuming and cursing when it lagged, the treacherous and revolting campaign by which Cesare carved for himself a kingdom in Italy. In the end, though the legend of

the Borgia poison is no doubt greatly exaggerated, he is now generally admitted to have poisoned at least two cardinals for the sake of their wealth. Legend has it that he in mistake, in 1503, himself drank the poisoned wine he had prepared for another cardinal, but the evidence seems to show that he died of malaria.

Cardinal della Rovere had a new formidable rival at the election which followed, and for a month a nonentity, Pius III, occupied the "Holy See" He died, and Giuliano made a corrupt bargain with Cesare Borgia for the vote of the Spanish cardinals. He became Julius II, one of the "great" Popes.

Julius was certainly great in his artistic achievements. It was under Alexander, Julius, and Leo X that the magnificent architects and artists and sculptors of the Roman school created their immortal work; but the Catholic who dreams of religious inspiration here lacks the sense of humour. These artists breathed an atmosphere of complete irreligion and dissoluteness. Rovere had, as I said, three known illegitimate children (Pastor, V, 369), and one of these, Felicia, he openly married at Rome while he was Pope. The leader of the Roman nobility, the Duke of Bracciano, repeatedly and publicly accused him of worse vice; but this charge we must leave open. As the Bishop of Nocera, Giovio, says, when he notices that the same charge of unnatural vice was brought against Julius's successor, Leo X, his friend and patron, "we cannot penetrate the secrets of the chambers of princes."

Catholic writers eagerly point out that Julius, like many other "bad Popes," had abandoned his irregularities before he became Pope. Naturally; he was sixty years old, as Popes generally were. The Catholic is grateful for very small mercies when he reads the true story of his "Holy See." But the character of Julius was unaltered. He cynically broke faith with Cesare Borgia as soon as he obtained

the tiara He broke faith with his cardinals, and snapped his fingers at his election promises. He promoted cardinals of his family He was utterly unscrupulous in his diplomacy and his wars for the restoration of the Papal States. His temper was vile, and his language odoriferous He maintained the colossal sale of offices and indulgences, though Europe was now in open revolt, and he made no serious effort to reform the cardinals He was, the Venetian historian Bembi said, "a master of every type of cruelty," and Guicciardini himself says that if we call Julius "great" (as all Catholic literature now does), we are taking the word in a new sense. He was, soberly speaking, a vile type of man.

Leo X, who succeeded Julius, had to face the revolt of Germany, where Luther was now in arms. But he believed that the Papacy would, as usual, stifle opposition, and he encouraged the licentious gaiety of Rome The most indecent comedies were performed before him in the Vatican, and he was the worst nepotist in the series of Popes He promoted to the cardinalate his friend Bibbiena—the writer of the worst of these indecent comedies, one of the most notoriously immoral clerics in Rome; also his illegitimate cousin, and his notoriously loose nephew and grandson of Innocent VIII, Innocenzo Cibo. He is accused of contracting unnatural vice *after* his election, and the contemporary suggestions of it are serious.[1] In diplomacy his lying and duplicity are almost without parallel; and he had Cardinal Petrucci strangled in prison, and confiscated the property of other cardinals, on the ground that they

[1] I have mentioned how his friend Bishop Giovio (*Vita Leonis X*, Bk. 4) refuses to absolve him. The leading historian of the time, Guicciardini, is more explicit (*Storia d'Italia*, XVI, 5), and says that it was the general belief that the Pope took to sodomy *after* he became Pope. Pico della Mirandola, one of the most learned and sincere Italians of that age, said that in no earlier civilization had there ever been so much vice, natural and unnatural.

conspired to kill him He in eight years spent £10,000,000, largely in personal luxury and dissipation, which were mainly raised—while Luther stormed in Germany—by the corrupt sale of offices and indulgences

Leo's two successors (1521-34) were quiet and decent men, dazed by the revolt in Germany, but too weak to reform Then came Paul III (1534-49), the Farnese, who had won his promotion by his sister Giulia's *liaison* with Pope Alexander, and had had four children born in his own cardinalitial palace. As he was now seventy years old, his morals were, the Catholic will be pleased to hear, sound But he made cardinals of his immoral nephews, and he protected the gay licence of the churchmen Germany now spoke to Rome in stern accents, and Paul directed the few good cardinals to draft a scheme of reform. It remains "a scrap of paper" in the Vatican Archives to this day. Germany pressed for a Council, and he was compelled to yield, but he insisted that it must be held at Rome, under his presidency.

In brief, Paul III resisted and obstructed with all his power the demand for reform In 1540 he established the Society of Jesus, and before many years the black-robed sons of Ignatius were at work Both they and the Pope began to plot for a war which should drown the new Protestantism in blood; but, luckily, the religious revolt now had its princes and armies. Paul was compelled to summon the Council of Trent (1546), which was supposed to be a common gathering of Papalists and Reformers, to define doctrine and reform the Church "in head and members." From Paul's instructions to his Legates we see that to the end he resisted reform, and merely sought to define doctrine, so as to have a standard for the condemnation and extinction of "the heretics." He died in 1549, the last of the long series of Unholy Fathers.

A few words will conclude this remarkable phase

of the story of the "Holy See." The Reformers had refused to come to Trent, or to be duped any longer by the Papacy The Council therefore was confronted with a formidable revolt of half of Europe. England and north Germany—the north of Europe generally—were lost, and the heresy found ample fuel in the southern lands In face of this appalling catastrophe, infinitely more effective (by its curtailment of revenue) than the supposed gift of divine guidance, the Papacy still refused for years to check the unprecedented licence of ecclesiastical life at Rome At the death of Paul III, in the usual odour of corruption, the cardinals were so far from reformed that in the election-chamber they fought and bid against each other for fifty days, and they then chose a man, Julius III, who cared for nothing but pleasure and gluttony He took an ugly Italian boy from the gutter and made a cardinal of him; and nearly all Rome was convinced that the boy was either his natural son or the instrument of his unnatural vices.

So there was not the least reform to 1555. Then began what is called the Counter-Reformation. But the idea that vice was now banished from Rome and that the Papal Court has ever since been tolerably respectable is ludicrous In the first place, the statement of Dr G H Putnam, in his *History of the Censorship*, that the reforming Popes, Paul IV, Pius IV, Pius V, Gregory XIII, and Sixtus V, "led austere lives" and "prohibited nepotism" is quite false. Paul IV was certainly keen on sexual reform (he was seventy-nine years old), but he was a cruel, violent, hard-drinking man, and so flagrant a nepotist that he had to be buried in secret and his body protected from the Romans Pius IV was a scandalous nepotist and so little religious that, it appears, the reformers sought to assassinate him. At his death in 1566 Rome was as immoral as ever, the higher courtesans notoriously making, largely from the prelates, up to £20,000 a year. Pius V did try to

cleanse Rome, though with terrible results, but Gregory XIII was a loose and luxurious man who restored everything One courtesan made £50,000 in Rome during his pontificate. Sixtus V at last set about sexual reform; but his Catholic biographer, Baron Hübner, admits that he was a scandalous nepotist, he got the Papacy by intrigue and bribery, he sold sacred offices flagrantly, and he was a man of the vilest temper Clement VIII, who came soon after, distributed £1,000,000 amongst his relatives, and nearly every Pope for years continued to sell indulgences and sacred offices and enrich his relatives. Urban VIII, the persecutor of Galileo, is estimated to have spent £20,000,000 on his relatives, a century after the "reform."

And sexual licence was again soon unchecked If we remember that Rome had been looted to the extent of over £100,000,000 in 1525 and its population reduced from 90,000 to 30,000; that half of Europe was now Protestant and sent no gold to Rome; and that syphilis had spread like a plague, we do not expect to find the same open parade as formerly. Ranke shows, however, by innumerable documents (the worst not translated, unfortunately) in the third volume of his *History of the Popes*, that Rome in the seventeenth century was as far from virtue as ever. The Counter-Reformation was, except for a few years and in only a few respects, a gross imposture. Nepotism and simony continued in the Papal Court: vice and violence spread again over Rome. We are told that there were ten times as many murders in Rome and its province (a total population of about half a million) in a year as there now are in London, with sixteen times larger a population! I have in my larger works shown that this was the case in every Catholic country And this was the Church which inspired the Thirty Years' War, the St. Bartholomew Massacre, and the Spanish Inquisition, to protect its remaining power.

Chapter VII

THE MODERN PHASE

In the opinion of "Catholic Truth," the reform of the Church, which it grossly exaggerates, was due to its own vital powers of recovery, not to the pressure of heretics As I have repeatedly pointed out, the most irritating feature of Catholic literature is its lack of an elementary sense of humour. The Papacy fought the demand of Europe for reform for at least two hundred years. It fought even the formidable revolt in England and Germany for fifty years It stirred up a holy war of Catholics and Protestants. Only when this last device completely failed did it set about the work of reform. Since those days it has lived under the eyes of an alert and fiercely critical body of writers, who were free to express their opinion without fear of the Inquisition, and its comparative respectability can scarcely be regarded as proving that Providence had any special interest in it.

The long earlier period, when it was free to live upon whatever inner inspiration it had, without the disturbing pressure of heretics, I have now faithfully described. What a waste of time and malignity, says the Catholic writer! Ought not an apostate priest, at least, to know that "we never held that the Popes were impeccable"? God allowed individual Popes to sin ("inscrutable reasons," etc.), and merely watched that they did not foul "the sacred deposit of the faith" by officially teaching heresy. All these records of corruption, we are told, have no bearing upon Catholic belief.

Once more the lack of a sense of humour and

proportion is extraordinary. What this "sacred deposit of the faith" is worth I will consider in the next section. The Catholic theologian will at least admit that the Popes had very little to do with it. It was generally formulated by Greeks, by councils, and by schoolmen. The Popes usually burned their fingers when they meddled with it. As a rule, they were politicians, soldiers, adventurers, good-livers, or men more conspicuous for piety than learning, who spent little time on theology.

But the idea that the Papacy was designed by Christ for the salvation of men, and guided continuously by a "Holy Ghost" in the discharge of this task, yet was suffered to linger for ages in the squalid degradation I have described, and merely protected from using improperly an infallible power of which scarcely any Pope was conscious, is a most amazing proposition. The very phrase, the "Holy See," tells clearly enough what the Catholic really believes, and is encouraged to believe, about the head of his Church. He believes that the Roman bishopric was founded by Christ for the general good of the world, and that for the proper discharge of its task it had the special interest and protection of the Spirit of God. He believes, literally, that the election of a Pope is attended by that particular divine guidance which is always sought at its commencement. He believes that the Papacy is, and has always been, apart from "a few stains," holy. Tell him that at least ten of his Popes were murderers and consummate scoundrels, that at least seventeen of the Popes whose character is known were immoral men (five being sodomists), that scores were simoniacs and protectors of corruption, and he will break into furious epithets about "traducers of the Holy See," or wonder in pained silence how any man can stoop to such mendacity. Yet it is the simple historical truth.

The Catholic writer first denies the unholiness outright; but among educated Catholic communities that phase of defence broke down thirty or forty years ago. Then he garbles, perverts, misquotes, and manipulates the historical evidence, as we shall see, in order to make the " stains " as small as he can. Having done this, he affects an air of liberality. Pope Leo XIII, he says, urged him to tell " the whole truth ": the Pope who threw open the " Secret Archives "—after abstracting the worst documents. The rest is easy. We admit that the Popes were not " absolutely impeccable," that there were " stains," and so on; but the total record is so grand and beneficent, so rich in good and great men, that the Catholic claim is intact

Now it is just this total record that damns the Papal claim. To ask us to believe that God took any kind of special interest in the Papacy from the fifth to the sixteenth century is to provoke a smile. To ask us to believe that God confined his interest to the official teaching on points of theology of these two hundred Popes, and was indifferent to their scandalous example and their gross neglect of the morals of Christendom, is too ludicrous for words. To ask us to believe that even one in ten of these Popes concerned himself with doctrine at all is to betray complete ignorance of the facts. To ask us to believe that Popes Liberius, Honorius III, Gelasius, John XXII, etc., were narrowly watched by the Spirit of God and prevented from teaching heresy in a certain technical way defined by modern theologians, but allowed to sign heretical formulæ and hold heresies and promote clerics who agreed with them, is a waste of ingenuity. To ask us to believe even in this " teaching " protection, when at the end of a thousand years of it Europe was a vast museum of spurious relics and weird beliefs, a place of utter darkness and vice and violence, is as naïve as it would

be to tell us that the alchemists and astrologers were inspired.

The Papacy was not even a good human invention. Its credentials were forged; its elections were corrupt and violent for centuries; its revenues were for ages as tainted as they could be; its chief effect was to prolong the darkness of Europe as much as possible; its records are more stained with vice and crime than those of any other authority of a civilized religion. "Holy See" indeed! Soberly, its distinction among the records of civilized religions is its unholiness

The remainder of the story may be told briefly, but cannot be ignored. We shall no longer find picturesque sinners like Sergius and the Johns and Bonifaces and Benedicts and Alexanders seizing the tiara. Europe is no longer a child. Printing has been invented, and accounts of Papal elections and acts are read all over Europe. The great Protestant-Catholic controversy opens, and hundreds of pens in each generation are poised over the head of the unhappy Papacy. The Catholic is welcome to admire its virtue under such conditions. It was on ticket-of-leave, and closely watched.

But when the Catholic persuades himself that its new behaviour was due to an internal growth, a "counter Reformation," the Jesuits, or a special divine interest, he had better look more closely into the facts The world split into halves, Catholic and Protestant Now, the great weakness of the Catholic theory is that Catholics behaved very prettily where they were in contact with heretics, or under the eyes of heretics, but almost as badly as ever where they were not The Catholicism of Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Spanish America remained just the same weird mixture of relics and magic and bad morals as it had been for ages

In northern lands, for instance, the Church—

under no pressure, of course—spontaneously ceased to sell indulgences; and it continued without the least alteration, and continued until a decade or two ago, to sell them in Spain and elsewhere—and the Papacy shared the profit on them! In the northern lands the Church became, as the need arose, quite zealous for education and the truth; but in Catholic lands it struggled fiercely against the demand of the "Liberals" for education, granted only the most miserable pretence of education when it was forced to do something, and still detained three-fourths of its followers in illiteracy and the crassest ignorance! In the northern lands it won converts to respect for the Holy See, in spite of the "few stains"; and in Italy, as late as the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a notoriously immoral cardinal very nearly obtained the tiara! In northern lands its priests poured ridicule on the married clergy of the Protestant bodies; and in Italy and Spain and Portugal and Spanish America they remained almost as immoral as in the Middle Ages! In northern lands the Catholic clergy breathed an elevated gospel of toleration and religious freedom, and plaintively lamented the restrictions on their activity; in southern lands they inspired Bartholomew massacres and continued burnings of heretics; and they cling still, as we shall see, to the doctrine that heretics may and must be put to death!

If a Catholic wants to find evidence of some divine operation upon his Church, I should advise him to see it in the development of heresy and unbelief on such a scale that the Vatican could no longer stifle it in blood; for that is the one force that has comparatively reformed the Papacy.

Down to the middle of the eighteenth century the record of the Papacy calls for no lengthy discussion. The Popes, generally decent men compared with their predecessors, "ruled" their remaining

subjects in the Latin countries and Austria, and interfered not with their superstitions and dense ignorance and vices. For a time they dreamed that the energetic sons of St. Ignatius would win back northern Europe. They allowed the Jesuits to try every known device, such as war and bribery, and to add others which do great credit to their ingenuity and unflinching determination. A Jesuit penetrated Sweden, and for years taught theology in a Lutheran college! Other Jesuits penetrated the most exclusive castes of the Hindus, and professed the Hindu mythology. Others penetrated courts, and blessed princely sinners, and controlled their mistresses and councils. Until at last the Catholic laity, sick of the lying, greed, intrigue, and unscrupulousness of the Jesuits, compelled Pope Clement XIV in 1773 to recognize (as he does in his Bull, *Dominus ac Redemptor Noster*) their corruption and suppress them; when they were cynically sheltered by those two adepts in their own art, Frederick and Catherine the Great.[1]

In the middle of the eighteenth century began the new phase. France, which had with great difficulty been retained under the allegiance of Rome, and had raised successive generations of Protestants and Gallicans and Jansenists to vex it, now begot a brood of philosophers like Voltaire. The learned and liberal Benedict XIV (1740–58) tried to meet the storm of criticisms and invective as well as the cardinals would allow him, but philosophy gave place to democracy, and democracy to Napoleon. Educated Frenchmen believed that the days of the Papacy were over. Napoleon handled poor Pius VI, a weak and muddle-headed pontiff, as if he were a commercial traveller of a suspected firm. But the restoration of thrones and altars, the return for a spell to the

[1] See the author's *Candid History of the Jesuits*

Middle Ages, set the Papacy on its feet once more after 1815.

It was the same Papacy as before. In Naples, Spain, and Portugal it countenanced the most bloody and horrible persecutions of the Liberals It permitted the restored monarchs to break their solemn oaths to respect the Constitution and (see my *Revolt in Spain*) co-operated with them in slaughtering ten times as many men as had been executed in the French Revolution. In France it fiercely supported the autocracy and resisted democratic reform. In Italy it clung to its Papal States, whose evil condition was (a British statesman said) "the opprobrium of Europe," and, in co-operation with Austria, sought to bludgeon the life out of young Italy Europe reeked again with the blood of high-minded men and women. Pius IX—"the saintly Pius," Catholics call him—was elected by the Holy Ghost to guide the Church through the age of trouble which this long alliance with reaction brought upon it.

Whether Pius was a saintly man or not must be left to better judges of that quality. Men who had been his schoolfellows told queer stories of him in later years; and his leading cardinal, Antonelli, the Secretary of State, was so notoriously immoral and corrupt that at his death his natural daughter, Countess Lambertini, openly claimed his large fortune. Rome had again become notorious for sexual licence.

But, whether Pius was a saint or not, his pontificate was one series of blunders. He met the democratic wave which swept over Europe in 1848, and raised again the hopes of Italy, with ludicrous weakness and unwisdom. The laity were now strong enough to insist upon a reform of the utterly corrupt Papal States. Under heavy pressure, and in great terror, he first capitulated, then (in Papal fashion) fled to the coast and disowned his promises. While more astute men fought for the Papal interests and revenues,

he was engrossed in discovering whether it was or was not safe for him to announce to the world that nineteen centuries ago Mary, the mother of Christ, was born without being tainted by the sin of Adam! This in a Europe that was absolutely boiling with social, political, and religious problems.

When the French performed their last service to the Papacy and restored its monarchy, Pius returned to study this extraordinary phenomenon of a world that would live no longer in the simple and vicious way its fathers had lived He had the literature of Europe searched for the "poison," and he solemnly gave to the world, in 1864, a "Syllabus" of the damnable errors which the devil had brought into Europe. The "errors" were, in fact, the kind of principles which Catholics now put forward as among those foundations of sound civic and social life which their Church has inspired; principles which were already embodied in the life of advanced civilizations like the United States, and are the direct outcome of the best spirit of the time. Such as the following were the monstrous errors hurled at an astonished world by the inspired pontiff little more than half a century ago:

14. Philosophy must be treated without taking any account of supernatural religion.

15. Every man is free to embrace and profess the religion which, judging by the light of human reason, he believes to be true.

16. Men may find the way of eternal salvation, and attain it, in any religion.

17. We may entertain at least a well-founded hope of the eternal salvation of all those who do not belong to the true Church of Christ.

19. The Church is not a true, perfect, and entirely free society. . . .

23. The Roman Pontiffs and Ecumenical Councils have exceeded the limits of their powers, usurped the rights of princes, and even erred in defining matters of faith and morals.

47. The best theory of civil society requires that popular schools . . . and educational institutions generally . . . should be freed from all ecclesiastical authority, government, and interference. . . .

55. The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.

63. It is allowable to refuse to obey, and even rebel against, legitimate princes [as the United States had done a century before].

67. By the law of nature the marriage-tie is not indissoluble. . . .

74. Matrimonial cases and espousals belong of their own nature to the civil courts.

80. The Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself to, and agree with, progress, liberalism, and modern civilization.

Pio, to his surprise, found that even Italy and France took no notice, and the poison continued to work The armies of Victor Emmanuel advanced. Let the provinces of Italy declare, by plebiscite, whether they will belong to Italy or the Papacy, said the Italians; and by mighty majorities they chose to be incorporated in the kingdom of Italy. Benedict XV, at the time of the Versailles Conference, thought that this was the ideal way of settling the fate of disputed provinces. Pio Nono, less than half a century before, shrieked that it was a monstrous heresy to consult his subjects as to what government they would live under So the last blood was shed over the ill-fated temporal power of the Popes, and that miserable anomaly was swept out of existence. I have quoted Catholic historians freely admitting that as long as the Popes remained kings, their territory was the most vicious and badly governed in Europe. Now they advise the rulers and statesmen of our world how to govern their states!

At the time, in 1870, Pius was presiding over a great ecclesiastical council at the Vatican. He had discovered that the Popes were personally infallible, and he wanted the assembled bishops to declare it.

Even Catholicism was not prepared to take his personal assurance of it. There was, in fact, considerable opposition. Aged prelates whom I met in my clerical days smacked their lips over the recollection of that Council. It was a monumental fight, in the good old ecclesiastical style. A French bishop had one day made a speech against the infallibility, and a furious Italian jumped up with the ironical words: "Iste gallus bene cantavit." [1] Iced water was, I was told, consumed by the gallon But Pio Nono wore down the opposition, by threatening some and cajoling others, and henceforth the Popes are "infallible," but not "impeccable."

Some of my readers will have been surprised that in the earlier chapters I have not dwelt more emphatically on the errors of the Popes and the relation of these to their supposed infallibility. I am too well trained a theologian to waste time on that mistaken controversy. Every error into which any Pope had ever stumbled—and they are numerous—was kept before the mind of the Pope's theologians when they framed the "definition" In effect it is claimed only that the Pope is infallible when he makes it plain that he is using his infallible prerogative; and as no Pope ever knew before that he *was* infallible, the acuteness of the theologians, and the simplicity of their followers, may be admired.

But the most amusing aspect of the affair is this: *from* 1870 *until our own time no Pope has ever dared to use his infallible gift, and probably no Pope ever will dare.* We have passed through such controversies as the world never knew before. Catholics have been just as dazed and troubled as others But their Popes have merely given them "encyclicals," for which no infallibility is claimed, and which may

[1] *Gallus* is Latin both for a "cock" and a "Frenchman," so the opprobrious pun runs: "That cock (Frenchman) crows very well, but," etc.

safely be disavowed by any successor. Meantime "Catholic Truth" has never ceased to crow over Protestants because, while *they* have only the "dead letter" of Scripture, *it* has a living infallible guide! It reminds one of the wooden guns of the Chinese.

Then came Leo XIII; and the legend of Leo XIII is as foolish as the legend of Pius IX. It has not yet been claimed that he was a saint. When he was Papal Nuncio at Brussels a wicked marquis one day offered him an open snuff-box, the lid of which was adorned with a nude lady. Leo—or Mgr Pecci, as he then was—placidly took the pinch, pointed to the lady, and asked: "Madame la Marquise?" It is not the way of saints, though Leo's character would be questioned by none. But when we are told that he was a great statesman or a great diplomatist, we smile. He lost his position as Nuncio at Brussels by his diplomatic incapacity, and he remained under a cloud as long as Pius IX lived.

The fortunes of his Church during his long pontificate are the best answer to the legend of his greatness. He made he foolish blunder of refusing to compromise with the Italian kingdom. He refused to receive the rich pension allotted to him, and forbade Catholics to take part in political life; and the royal family permanently defied the Papal anathema, and millions of Italians quitted the Church. He refused to recognize the French Republic until it was too late; and as a result the thirty million French Catholics of 1874 have dwindled to about five millions in our time. He refused to rebuke the scandalous old traditions of the Spanish and Portuguese Churches; and as a result Portugal has destroyed its Church, and Spain is very rapidly disowning it. He obliged England by interfering with the Irish revolt in Parnell's time; and he only angered Ireland, and got nothing from England, where Catholicism loses every decade. He obliged Germany by interfering in Poland, as in Ireland; and Germany still refused to

recognize the Jesuits. He played fast and loose with democracy, first angering the aristocracy by uttering such platitudes as that the worker must have a living wage (which he declined to define), then wearily deserting the workers. He made pronouncements on the Biblical question which caused Catholic professors, in my hearing, to speak bitterly of his ignorance. Throughout his life he saw his Church only shrink and diminish. I am told that in his last illness he muttered deliriously about the problems that oppressed him.

Then came the crowning "inspiration," Pius X! His pontificate was a comedy to compare with that of Celestine V. To face the twentieth century, with its wonderful knowledge, its stirring progressiveness, its bold democracy, the light of the Holy Spirit—that is to say, the usual election intrigue—discovered poor old Pius X, an ignorant and stubborn Italian peasant. His one achievement was to drive out of the Church what was left of Catholic scholarship. He had a type of mind like that of the Irishman who, when asked if he really believed that the whale swallowed Jonah, said: "Faith, I'd believe that *he* swallowed the whale if the Church told me to." Pius soon cleansed Rome of the scholars and liberals whom Leo had attracted to it in his later and more serious years. He set up Inquisition Committees throughout the Church, to watch all scholars, lay and clerical. It was unsafe to express a doubt whether Moses had really written the description of his own funeral in the Pentateuch. And when the poor man had purified his Church of all honest and outspoken scholars, he struck a medal in honour of his victory.

Benedict XV came to the throne with a declaration that he would maintain the same policy. He was a diplomatist, not a scholar; and a terrific diplomatic problem loomed at once before him. For his "neutrality" Alfred Loisy, for years the shining light of the Catholic Church in France, has lashed

his earlier master with scorn, and has turned his back upon the Church. When the war was over, he emerged as an apostle of peace, a defender of small nationalities, a tender-hearted humanitarian who would bid the blood cease flowing. It was the Papal diplomacy of all time finding utterance once more. If France, Italy, and Russia had won the war outright, more than ten million Catholics—in Alsace-Lorraine, the Trentino, Poland, and Slavonia—would have been transferred from Powers intensely favourable to the Vatican (Germany and Austria) to "atheistic" France, excommunicated Italy, and schismatical Russia.

The same policy was followed by the far abler Pope, Pius XI, who succeeded Benedict in 1922. Secret diplomacy all over the world is the one weapon by which he held together the discredited fabric of his Church. Even while he was co-operating with the Socialists in Belgium, he sold Italy to Mussolini and, after a year of hard bargaining, joined in the greatest political crime of the twentieth century. He supported the tyranny of Pilsudski in Poland, and he wrote letters on the august moral principles of social and political life to England and America.

In my *Papacy in Politics To-day* (Cheap Edition; 1939) I pointed out that Cardinal Pacelli was the real author of the blundering policy of the later years of Pius XI, and I predicted (p. 152) that he would be the next Pope. Now, in a mood of profound dejection which will probably shorten his pontificate, he surveys the ruin he has wrought: Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland turn from him, Germany is rapidly destroying his Church, Spain deeply embittered and awaiting the hour of revenge . . . But I return to this in the last chapter. Immutable Rome! It cannot even find statesmen of sufficient ability to bolster up the pretence of Divine Guidance.

Section II

THE CHURCH OF ROME TO-DAY

Chapter I

CATHOLIC SCHOLARSHIP

The reader may perhaps wonder if it is possible in such countries as the United States, England, and Germany for the writers of any sect to fence their people from the scholarship of modern times. If the facts of Papal history are as I have described them, and they are—if historians generally are agreed upon those facts, and they are—surely it will not be possible for a handful of ecclesiastical historians to maintain in modern times a version which falls materially short of the truth?

I will describe in a later chapter the discipline by which the Catholic laity are generally kept within the sacred compound prescribed by the Church. It is a serious error to suppose that Catholics are only forbidden to read books which are "on the *Index*." The Catholic is strictly instructed from childhood that the reading of "bad books" is as grave a fault as, or even graver than, sexual irregularity; and it is explicitly explained to him that any book "against faith or morals" falls into this category. A book against the faith, moreover, is any book which contradicts the teaching of Catholic literature on an important dogmatic point; certainly any book which "attacks"—that is to say, tells the true story of—the Church and the Papacy. The Catholic is thus restricted to his own literature; and each book recommended for his use has had to be examined and passed by the bishop.

In practice, of course, even this form of censorship is not universally effective. As I have said, a good half of the subjects of the Vatican *cannot* read. Of the remaining hundred millions the overwhelming majority *do not* read serious books. The priests have, therefore, only a small and inquisitive minority to control; generally the men who are taunted by their neighbours for not reading both sides. These are told that they may not, under pain of mortal sin (eternal damnation), read any book against the faith except by permission of their confessors; and the confessor is instructed that mere curiosity—or what most people call a desire for the truth—is not a sufficient reason for doing so. In fact, however, some Catholic men, and a very few women, defy the regulation.

These considerations will prepare the reader to learn that Catholic scholarship to-day vindicates the title "Holy See" by giving a grossly inaccurate version of the remarkable story I summarized in the last section.

Any person who lives within call of the reference-library of a large town may verify this without needing to examine scores of volumes. I will test my charge by the contents of the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, the most important and authoritative work published by the Church, the most recent co-operative enterprise of what it regards as its leading scholars. It is a vast work in sixteen large volumes, issued by the American Church—the wealthiest and most liberal branch of Roman Catholicism—between 1907 and 1912. "The object of the *Encyclopædia* is to give the whole truth without prejudice," and "in the determination of the truth the most recent and acknowledged scientific methods are employed." Scholars have been enlisted for this purpose from all parts of the Catholic world. The *Encyclopædia* represents, it modestly but firmly tells us, "Catholic scholarship in every part of the

world." And it is as representative of such scholarship that I proceed to examine it.

Quite early in it occur two articles which are pertinent to my inquiry—the articles entitled "Apostolic See" and "Apostolic Succession." They are by the English scholar Dr. Wilhelm—with whose fine old English name the world is strangely unfamiliar—and they contain some remarkable specimens of "the latest and most accurate information." "As early as the fourth century," says Father Wilhelm, "the Roman See was already the Apostolic See *par excellence*, not only in the West, but also in the East." As far as the West is concerned, we readily grant that the Roman bishopric was "the Apostolic See *par excellence*," because it was the *only* Apostolic See; but of the East we have told, and will tell, a different story.

In the second of these short articles Father Wilhelm is equally "accurate" and "scientific." That Peter was at Rome and founded the Roman bishopric is, he says, "among the best-ascertained facts of history," and "no scholar now dare contradict it." As the point is, in my opinion, not of the least importance, I have not discussed it. But to say that Peter's activity is "among the best-ascertained facts of history" is—a fair specimen of "Catholic Truth"! If the reader cares to glance at another and more authoritative Encyclopædia, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (article "Peter"), he will learn from Professor Lake, who *is* an authority, that evidence of Peter's mission to Rome is "not quite convincing," and has "often been bitterly attacked," but has a degree of probability. Only a few among non-Catholic historians admit it.

Then Father Wilhelm grows bolder. "In the third century," he says, "the Popes claim authority from the fact that they are St. Peter's successors, *and no one objects to this claim.*". That is how we

establish the Roman case by the "most recent and acknowledged scientific methods"! The reader may ask in surprise whether Father Wilhelm never heard of the Bishops of Asia Minor telling Pope Victor to mind his own business, or what Cyprian of Carthage said to the Pope for interfering in African matters, as I described in the first chapter. He will be still further surprised to hear that these episodes are precisely the proofs adduced by Father Wilhelm in support of his statement! How? Why, it is quite easy, in a Catholic atmosphere. You tell the indisputable fact that Victor asserted his supremacy in Asia, and that Cornelius received an appeal from Africa; *and you do not tell the sequel.*

But these two short articles are mere summaries. We turn to the article "Pope," the most important article in a Catholic Encyclopædia, and settle down to a very serious consideration of the Catholic position —an article free from all those lamentable misrepresentations and errors which "disfigure" all non-Catholic discussions of the subject, and drawn up (in defiance of the "Syllabus") according to the latest scientific methods. The article has been entrusted to the English Jesuit, Father Joyce, of whose scholarship also I had, strangely enough, never heard before. It may, however, be familiar to the reader, and the article is, at all events, peculiarly interesting.

Father Joyce opens on the same firm, paternal note as Father Wilhelm. The foundation of the Roman Church by Peter is now beyond dispute, and "history bears complete testimony that from the very earliest times the Roman See has *ever* claimed the supreme headship [which Gregory the Great called "a blasphemous title"], and that *that headship has been freely acknowledged by the universal Church.*" Most assuredly Catholic scholars may hide their scholarship very modestly from the world at large, but they show little modesty in teaching their own

folk. Are all the episodes and authorities I quoted in the early chapters disputed by this Jesuit professor? Not in the least. They are proofs of *his* thesis. It is quite worth while examining his procedure in detail.

His first proof is that as early as 95 or 96 A.D. Pope Clement I, in his "Letter to the Corinthians," very drastically interfered in the affairs of the Corinthian Church, and claimed that the Holy Spirit guided him in doing so. There you have the supremacy of Rome asserted and unchallenged within a generation of the death of Peter! But Father Joyce prudently omits to mention one point which, if he mentioned it, would deflate his splendid argument as a child pricks a balloon. *There was probably no bishop of Corinth at the time.* In the *Catholic Encyclopædia* itself the special authority on Clement, writing under that head, admits that this is held even by Catholic scholars. So, apart from the question of the genuineness of the letter, which is not undisputed (several letters were forged in Clement's name), it would follow at the most that the Pope interfered in a community which had no "overseer." However, the letter is, as I said, not a letter of Bishop Clement, but of the Church at Rome to the Church at Corinth.

The second proof is a high-flown and ambiguous compliment which Ignatius of Antioch pays to the Roman See on its "ascendancy." As we saw, such compliments to the Church founded by the two leading apostles and housed in the imperial city have nothing to do with the question of jurisdiction. The third proof is a similar complimentary reference of St. Irenæus to the "superior authority" (on points of doctrine) of the Church founded by the two great apostles; and Irenæus is writing in the West, where there is no other apostolic Church. It is irrelevant.

In his fourth grand argument Father Joyce, like Father Wilhelm, takes the bull by the horns, and

finds evidence in the unhappy adventure of Pope Victor. The Pope, he says, excommunicated the Asiatics; and *their* action "involved no denial of the supremacy of Rome," while St. Irenæus "assumed Victor had the power" and merely asked him to be lenient. Father Joyce is again prudent enough not to give the reference to the authority, lest some misguided Catholic should look up the English translation of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (v, 34). As we saw (p. 6), the facts are an emphatic repudiation of Victor's claim of supremacy. The Asiatic bishops told Victor that they were not in the least "intimidated" by his threat of excommunication, that they flatly refused to obey him, and that they would "be judged by God, not man"; and the Western bishops "sharply attacked" Victor for his action.

In his fifth argument Father Joyce audaciously turns to St. Cyprian and the African Church! He is good enough to acknowledge that Cyprian's ideas of the Pope's power in some respects were "inadequate," but says that Cyprian granted Rome "a primacy, not merely of honour, but of jurisdiction"! If the reader will turn back and read the undisputed passages I quoted (pp. 7 and 8), he will ask in astonishment how even a Jesuit can achieve this? Prithee, in this way. He tells how Cyprian urges Stephen to write to Gaul, *and he entirely suppresses the fact that the Gauls had appealed to both Cyprian and Stephen, and Cyprian had already written!* Then he complacently concludes: "It is manifest that one who regarded the Roman See in this light believed that the Pope possessed a real and effective primacy." These are the "acknowledged scientific methods"—of Jesuits. This represents "Catholic scholarship in every part of the world." Then these Jesuits, I am told, write privately to inquiring Catholics, that "McCabe is quite discredited as an historian."

Does the reader still think my language intemperate? Does he think that "Catholic scholars" are just as learned and candid as any others? Does he begin to see the peculiarities of "Catholic Truth" even in its most responsible form? Does he perceive the advantage of forbidding the reading of "bad books"?

We may now proceed to examine the second point: the character of the Papacy from the fourth to the fifteenth century. On the earlier "holiness" of the Roman Church the *Encyclopædia* is tantalizing. We glance over the list of the Popes, and see that all except one down to the year 530 are "saints." Even Callistus is still a "saint and martyr," in defiance of all modern scholarship. We look up the special article on "Callistus." It is again, I regret to find, by an English "scholar," Father Chapman. The English seem to have been chosen largely for their greater fluency in theological inexactitude. Father Chapman airily assures the Catholic that Döllinger and De Rossi have "demolished the contemporary scandal" written by St. Hippolytus; whereas, as I have shown in my history of the Papacy, they have merely demolished each other and left the scandal intact. "There is good evidence that Callistus was really a martyr," says Father Chapman; which even Döllinger and De Rossi do not admit, and no scholar now does. In fine, says this English Benedictine, "if we knew more of Callistus from *Catholic* sources he would probably appear as one of the greatest of the Popes"; on which we can only remark that it seems possible to make anybody appear anything on the "Catholic sources" of that time. Do they not make the anti-Popes Hippolytus and Felix "saints and martyrs"?

Damasus is the only one of these fifty early Popes whose aureole of sanctity has been omitted from the list. But in the article on Damasus it is restored

in all its splendour, and his life and work are gorgeously described. But what about those indisputable hundred and sixty corpses which his followers laid upon the floor of a church in the election fights? Quite easy. The followers of Ursicinus, the anti-Pope, " resorted to much violence and bloodshed " in their endeavour to force him upon the meek and long-suffering majority. *Their* corpses (one hundred and sixty in one church) and the weeks of bloody riot are not mentioned. So the miraculous sanctity of the Popes for four hundred years is safe; especially as we know absolutely nothing about the vast majority of them except the official panegyric. Where we *do* know a little it is " St." Victor, and " St." Callistus, and " St." Damasus, the tickler of women's ears.

As to the " martyrs," who make the early Roman Church so fragrant, the *Encyclopædia* is, as I said, tantalizing. It duly confesses, in most of the articles, that the " Acts of the Martyrs " are late and unreliable; but the legend is reproduced in such a way, and the modern criticism is often so obscurely expressed, that the average Catholic will continue to take his " pious romances " as lightly embroidered fact.

From the fourth century onward the list of the Popes undergoes a remarkable change. Up to that point we have a solid and unbroken line of saints. From the fifth century the " St." becomes rare, and it presently disappears altogether. No explanation of this remarkable phenomenon is offered. It looks as if in the wicked days of the Roman Empire everybody was a saint, but that from the moment when the Empire is wholly converted to Christianity it becomes increasingly difficult, and ultimately impossible, in spite of the hundred-fold increase of the clergy, to find a saint for the supreme office. Some readers may prefer to think that, while the earlier Popes are almost all unknown to us, the later Popes

are too well known; or that the Romans of the fourth and fifth and sixth centuries, who canonized all their predecessors, had too much sense of humour to canonize the men they *knew*. But a profane historian must not speculate on these matters.

Then we come to the adventurous Popes of the eighth and ninth and tenth centuries. There is in a Catholic publication a great advantage in scattering the Popes over sixteen large volumes instead of giving, as the *Encyclopædia* declines to give, a connected record of their lives. The Catholic does not get the cumulative sense of horror. He does not perceive that it is not a question of an occasional bad man, but of the degradation of the "Holy See" during long periods, of a century or more; and therefore his faith in the "supernatural gift" is less strained.

Of ambitious struggles for the Papacy, of violent and corrupt conclaves, of forged credentials, and so on, there is hardly any mention. Indeed, apart from one or two Popes who are claimed to have been mere pretenders (and are dyed as black as you like), only three of the Popes—John XII, Benedict IX, and Alexander VI—are admitted to have been bad men! One or two others may be "suspected," or "not above reproach," or immoral before they became Popes; but that is all. The rest is slander of the Holy Fathers. If you put end to end the biographies of the Popes in these sixteen volumes, you get a marvellous record of sanctity and devotion to the cause of humanity, interrupted only by three quite black sheep and two or three slightly spotted. Let us see how it is done.

There is Stephen IV, who begins the amiable practice of cutting out men's eyes, after winning office by the swords of the Lombards. Well, Father Mann (one of the leading whitewashers, author of a history of the Popes in ten volumes which will supply

whitewash for generations to come) assures us that it is " generally allowed " that Stephen was " unable to hinder " these barbarities. No such thing is allowed, of course, because, as I recorded (p. 26), Stephen himself told Pope Hadrian, who tells us the fact in the very authoritative *Pontifical Book*, that he ordered the eyes of Christopher and Sergius to be put out as part of a bargain with Didier. This well-known passage Father Mann suppresses; and of the murder of Christopher and the blinding of Sergius by the Pope's order he blandly observes that King Didier " in some mysterious manner effected the fall of the Pope's chief ministers " !

I take next Boniface VI, whose disreputable character is discreetly veiled, and the appalling Sergius, who is boldly defended against every charge. We are assured, on Father Mann's authority, that Sergius had no improper relations with Marozia (though Duchesne and other Catholic authorities admit this, and no serious historian doubts the evidence), and did not murder anybody. There is merely a grudging concession that he was rather a violent man, in a violent age. The little episode of the corpse of Formosus is not stressed. The " scientific method " of doing this is simple. When the contemporary writer Vulgarius assures us that Sergius was a murderer and a comprehensive blackguard, he is declared to be unreliable. When he (after being grimly summoned to Rome by Sergius) changes his note and sings the high and chaste virtues of Sergius and Theodora and Marozia, he is grossly quoted as an authority. When Bishop Liutprand tells us the vices of the Popes, he is quite unreliable; when he or any other writer mentions a good deed, it is put into the record without reserve.

By this method John X is next whitewashed by Father Kirsch (Professor at Freiburg), Father Mann's chief rival in the art. The charge against John's

virtue is tossed aside as quite a foolish slander, on the ground that his supposed lover, Theodora, was advanced in years at the time (which is not stated) and was very virtuous (on the authority of Vulgarius in his second phase). I have in my history of the Papacy shown that Theodora may even have been in her thirties, as anybody can calculate, at the time which is suggested by Liutprand.

John XII is abandoned by the most heroic of apologists. His crimes are too notorious and varied. John XV and other shady Holy Fathers of that awful period are, however, resolutely varnished. Benedict VIII, the Count who seized the Papacy in 1003, is presented to us as a " great and strong ruler," but the apologetic ardour again fails before the notoriety of the crimes and vices of Benedict IX, whose monumental misdeeds are, however, lightly touched. Then we reach the period of good Popes, like Hildebrand, whose vagaries are buried under mounds of fragrant panegyric. So far the Encyclopædists have found only two bad Popes in a thousand years, and have conveyed not the faintest impression what Rome was like during the early Middle Ages.

All the ghastly fights for the Holy Seat before and after Hildebrand are ignored, and we wander through the flowery meads of the Middle Ages, as depicted by Catholics. Even the pontificate of Boniface VIII does not arrest the whitewash-brush. You will remember how Boniface got rid of the poor hermit, Celestine V, and wore the tiara for him; how he imprisoned the man, and is said by a reputable authority to have made an end of him; and how, in a posthumous trial, high-placed ecclesiastics deposed on oath that he was guilty of every vice. Yet to this man about eighteen columns of panegyric are devoted, and we are told that he was " one of the most remarkable pontiffs that ever occupied the

Papal throne." But Professor Oestreich settles all that. It is "now" proved that Celestine voluntarily abdicated—which he certainly did not—and that his "detention" was "a simple measure of prudence." The indictment of Boniface under Clement V is now admitted by "grave historians" (only Bishop Hefele, another experienced whitewasher, is mentioned) to be sheer calumny; and, after all, he was not found guilty (for reasons that we saw). So Boniface fills several glowing pages of the *Encyclopædia*.

The Clements of Avignon are cleared with a few strokes of the Encyclopædic brush. Clement V was an admirable man. Clement VI was "a lover of good cheer"; his financial methods were "arbitrary"; he is even charged with "gross nepotism." The real scandal of his pontificate is not seen. Then there is the egregious John XXIII, whose comprehensive crimes and vices were laid bare by the Council of Constance; and all that we learn about *him* is that "his moral life was not above reproach, and his unscrupulous methods in no wise accorded with the requirements of his high office"!

Let us finish with it. Callistus III, who introduced the Borgia and idly let his Court sink, was a "man of lofty ideals, of boundless courage, energy, and perseverance." Sixtus IV, who deeply corrupted the College of Cardinals, is painted in all the colours of virtue and greatness. Innocent VIII, who smiled on the corruption and adopted Prince Jem (and the spear of Longinus), is admitted (seeing that his son and daughter were the most familiar figures of Rome) to have been loose in his youth, and it is politely regretted that he "resorted to the objectionable expedient" of selling sacred offices to the highest bidder; but otherwise he comes out well. The vices of Alexander VI are admitted (seeing that the Vatican has legal documents relating to his children); but the flagrant simony of his election is merely "not

improbable" on a small scale, and of his later crimes and licence, in the Vatican, the reader gets no idea. Of Julius II it is admitted that his life as cardinal was "far from stainless"—a delicious phrase when the writer admits he had three daughters—but otherwise his grave defects are concealed and his character and deeds utterly perverted. Leo X is treated with even greater leniency; while Paul III, whose well-known irregularities are not mentioned, is boldly described as winning promotion by his brilliant ability, and not a word is said about his sister's *liaison* with the Pope who promoted him!

That is "Catholic Truth" and "Catholic scholarship." It is, quite seriously, typical of the highest Catholic literature. Hefele, Gasquet, and all the rest are just as sophistical. Pastor's *History of the Popes* is the sole outstanding exception, but, as I have frequently shown, even that is often lacking in candour, and the total picture is false because good and evil are not equally discussed. Father Mann's *History of the Popes* is like his articles: learned, based upon the original sources, but utterly lacking in sense of scholarship, a reckless partisan tract from beginning to end. Of more popular literature, or of other applications of "Catholic scholarship," I need not speak. I have justified my word. Catholics are forbidden to read the truth. What is purveyed to them under the name of "Catholic Truth" is a monstrous perversion of science and history. Not one Catholic in a million knows the true story of the "Holy See." And now their writers boast that they lent their assistance in the compilation of the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and have contributed to the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*.

Chapter II

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

With the bulk of the teaching of the Church I am not concerned, since it is the common teaching of Christianity. Let us rather consider what are the distinctive doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome to-day: the perfect outcome of eighteen centuries of the "supernatural gift," the "priceless treasure of the faith" on which the Catholic prides himself, the belief which he would persuade America and England and Germany to accept now that the Latin nations are abandoning it.

Two doctrines may be taken as broadly distinctive of the Roman Church: the doctrine of the Papacy, with which I need hardly deal further, and the doctrine of the sacraments. We need not use the technical jargon which ages of theologizing have invented in this connection. It is enough that a "sacrament" is supposed to give a special "grace" or spiritual energy which the poor non-Catholic cannot get; and that these grace-giving ceremonies are baptism, penance, the eucharist, confirmation, holy orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. It is a whole life-outfit, from the cradle to the grave; leaving us in complete bewilderment how the Middle Ages were, and the countries which linger in the Middle Ages to-day are, so very *un*-spiritual.

The sacrament of baptism is for infants, and is to be conferred as soon as the doctor will permit the infant to be taken to the church. For a very serious reason. Every child of Adam has incurred the sin

of Adam, and must pay the penalty. At first it was drastically held that every man, woman, or child who had not had this stain "washed away" in the waters of baptism would burn in hell for ever. That was too much even for medieval human nature, and the theologians made a compromise. The unbaptized cannot enter heaven. The Church sticks to that. But the innocent babes do not go to hell. They go into a sort of dim modern extension of the underworld, and may even be happy there; but they will never "see God," or see their parents again.

So the babe is rushed to the church on the first Sunday afternoon after its birth. If it catches a fatal cold, the parent must not grieve. It has gone straight to heaven, absolutely spotless. The church, and often the water, are, however, now warmed, and the weird ceremony proceeds.

I have but a dim recollection of the performance, which I have many times conducted. The "god-parents" were detained at the door, and questioned; and then I put the end of a silk-slip (stole), which I wore round my neck, into the god-father's hand, and metaphorically dragged him into the church. The rest is, in my mind—and I shudder at the idea of looking up the details—a dim phantasmagoria. You spit on your finger, and daub the babe's mouth and eyes, and say to it "Ephetha" (in Hebrew). You put some salt into its mouth; which it generally resents in the usual manner and tone. You talk very severely, in bad Latin, to whatever devils there may be in the pink morsel, and bid them go—to Protestants or anywhere. Then you pour a shell of water, very highly exorcised and blessed, over its head (taking extreme care that it touches the skin, not merely the hair, or the babe will never go to heaven); and the dreadful sentence which overhung it, because a legendary being named Adam ate a legendary apple in a legendary garden at a time

when the race was already millions of years old, is mercifully cancelled.

The "beautiful symbolism" of all this is quite lost upon even the educated Londoners and Berliners and New Yorkers who gravely and periodically assist at the performance. It is all in Latin. Even when you ask the sponsors to "renounce the devil and all his works and pomps" for the child, you must do it in a dead language, and a trained assistant must answer. Perhaps it is as well that the Church keeps the dead language. Probably few educated Catholic men would survive the ordeal if it were in English. As it is, it has disadvantages. To the Latin question whether the man believed in God, etc., I sometimes got the Latin answer, "I renounce him"; and to the question whether he renounced Satan and all his gay inspirations, I got a very emphatic "I believe in him."

It is difficult to discuss sacrament No. 1 seriously. Spittle and devils, holy oils and holy waters, lighted candles and collecting boxes are bad enough, but the essential principle of the thing is intolerable. Even the comparative damnation of the unbaptized, with "every modern convenience," is too stupid for words. There are Catholic scholars now who regard Adam and Eden as "a beautiful legend." The wonderful *Encyclopædia* is not sure about it, and—in the face of the absolutely unanimous science of modern times—flatly denies the evolution of man. Yet it is still the emphatic and obligatory teaching of the Church that every child born (except Mary—that is the real meaning of the "Immaculate Conception") shares "the sin of Adam," and must be put through the extraordinary performance I have described.

This is the first of the sacraments. The child then enjoys its primitive innocence, and plays marbles, sure of heaven, for several years. At about the age of seven it is, by the Catholic Church, regarded as

capable of earning eternal torment by its own act, and here the sacrament of penance (confession) is, in the stupendous wisdom of the inspired Church, mercifully provided. But that institution requires a separate chapter, and I pass to the sacrament of the eucharist.

The sacrament of the eucharist—that is, the doctrine of the " real presence " of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine—is quite the central and overwhelming belief of the Catholic Church. Almost everything in its ritual is associated with this belief. It is on this priceless possession of a real live god in their midst, and on the miraculous nature of their Papacy, that Catholics affect their amusing air of superiority to all the rest of mankind. And it is one of the most childish and foolish beliefs that was ever preserved in a civilized religion.

This is not the place to discuss how the simple supper of bread and wine, which Christ is described as bidding his followers celebrate in memory of him, became " the sacrament of the eucharist." The mysterious words attributed to Christ, " This is my body " and " This is my blood," cannot be proved to have existed in the Scriptures before the end of the first century; and as we know that some such mystic belief was not uncommon in the pagan world—the wine and corn, the most common sources of nourishment in that world, being regarded as especial embodiments of the nature-gods—it seems that the early Christian communities contracted the belief and added the words to the growing record of Christ's words and deeds.

The early Church gradually elaborated this simple ceremony into the sacrifice of the " mass ": a ceremony which takes its name (a corruption of the Latin *missa*) from the concluding words, spoken by the " assistant " (deacon), " Ite, missa est " (" Go, it is over "). Now, when we recollect that this

formula was used at the close of the service in the temples of Mithra, and when we learn from St. Augustine that the pagans of his day said that the Christian "mystery of bread and wine" was indistinguishable from the Mithraic mystery, we have an important clue to the evolution of the mass.

From this and other scattered indications we know that the Mithraists held a secret ceremony of consecrated bread and wine in their temples; that lighted candles and incense, and priests in silk and linen, were part of the ceremony; and that the central idea was the redemption of men from sin by their Saviour, their "Ram of God." It is clear that, in the evolution of the complete "mass" from the simple supper on a domestic table, the pagan religions were freely laid under contribution.

The doctrine of the Church is *not* generally understood. This is not due to "misrepresentation," but to the fact that a non-Catholic does not find it credible that any educated modern man or woman should believe such things, and his imagination fails to grasp the full truth. He is aware that Catholics profess the "real presence" of God in the eucharist. Being accustomed to the belief that God is everywhere, he sees no intellectual enormity in this. He does not know, and can hardly be convinced, that Catholics believe, and their Church sternly and dogmatically insists, that in what seems to the eye to be bread or wine, there is, after the words of consecration, no bread or wine at all, but the living body of Jesus Christ down to the last eyelash and toenail!

In the earlier Middle Ages, as among the uneducated Catholic millions to-day, no explanation of the *appearance* of bread and wine was needed; nor was it necessary to attempt any explanation how the human body of Christ could be simultaneously in heaven and in a million places on the earth. To such minds anything is possible. Explanation is as

superfluous as argument. But when the Moors stimulated the sleeping intellect of Europe, and the scholastic movement began, faith had to be made reasonable—to be sophisticated.

So the schoolmen fell back upon an ancient and discredited opinion of the philosopher Aristotle. In those days it was thought to be an "explanation" of a piece of bread to say that its whiteness, shape, solidity, etc. were "accidents," and that the "substance" lay, invisible, under them, much as a kernel is hidden in a nut. This was very convenient. By a supernatural operation, in the mass, the invisible "substance" of the bread and wine is replaced by the "substance" of the real, living body of Christ, and the "accidents" (shape, whiteness, etc.) are permitted to remain. As to how the body of Christ could be in a million places at once, and could exist in its full proportions in a crumb of bread, the answer was—bow to the mystery of "transubstantiation." They bowed to "the blessed word."

It must not for a moment be supposed that modern educated Catholics do not literally believe this jumble of pagan superstitions and medieval verbosity. They do. It is the very sternest dogma of the Church. The few advanced Catholics who are called Modernists would modify the belief, but most of these have been driven out of the Church by Pius X and Benedict XV. There is not a priest in the world who does not preach that doctrine, literally and emphatically, from his pulpit a score of times every year. There is not a Catholic layman in the Church who dare express the faintest doubt about it, and there are *very* few who wish to.

The priest dons his mystic (or Mithraic) garments, and carries his wafer to the altar. You imagine him then proceeding to the rite with portentous solemnity. Not in the least. If he does not compress the "mass" into a space of about five-and-twenty minutes, there

may be coughs and shuffling in the body of the church. The people do not like a "slow" priest. They do not themselves realize what this means. The "mass" has, in the course of time, grown into a very lengthy series of prayers and rites and invocations, and the young priest has to be "drilled" for weeks in advance so as to "get through" in less than half an hour. As a result he rushes through those "sublime" prayers and hymns (as the admiring non-Catholic calls them, when he reads them, slowly, in the Missal) at a rate, literally, of at least 250 words a minute! Do not imagine, however, that this irreverence is entirely the fault of the laity. The priest has, besides his "mass," a very lengthy series of prayers and psalms to read every day from his "Breviary." This he says in private, merely repeating the words with his lips. And this solemn series of invocations to and praises of the Deity he usually "gets through" at the rate of 300 words a minute!

At the middle of the "mass" he consecrates the bread and wine, and here he must go slowly. The pitfalls begin again. If he does not articulate each word of the Latin formula, "Hoc est corpus meum" (which the ribald Protestants of the Middle Ages contracted into "Hocus-Pocus," but which means "This is my body") and "Hic est sanguis meus" ("This is my blood"), with perfect clearness, if he does not say it *right at* the bread and wine, there will be no magic. Then he resumes the 250 words a minute until the second solemn pause, the swallowing of Christ. He must, of course, swallow the large wafer—and it gives unconscionable trouble in a dry mouth—without putting his teeth into "the body of Christ." He must take the "blood" without spilling a drop, for in each visible crumb of bread or drop of wine there is the *whole* Christ, godhead and manhood.

Once, in saying mass, I unluckily upset the chalice (the silver cup of wine) *after consecration*, and "the

blood of Christ" streamed over the altar, to the horror of the little congregation. I had, in accordance with the ritual, to steep the cloths three times in water, and pour the water by the wall of the house, where no foot could tread. In his *Fourteen Years a Jesuit* (Vol. II, p. 223) Count Hoensbroech tells an experience he had when a priest. An old woman told him that, after receiving the wafer in her mouth, she reflected that she was swallowing Christ's genital organs, *and she spat the wafer into her prayer-book.* She gave it to him, and—*he had to eat it!* The "body of Christ" is in every crumb of the bread, "whole and entire" in the emphatic language of the Church; and if a crumb (the size is a matter of dispute) falls from the wafer when the priest goes to put these into the mouths of the laity, Christ, divinity and humanity, is apt to be trodden underfoot.

If a burglar steals the silver vessel containing the consecrated wafer, he steals Christ; and the adventures of Christ in the burglar's establishment may be left to the imagination. If a wicked apostate priest cares to use his power, to make Christ for a ribald gathering of sceptics, he can. Catholics seriously believe that this (the "black mass") has been repeatedly done at Paris. The Church cannot take away the magical power even from an apostate priest. If I seriously and intentionally say the correct words, in the correct way and the correct dead language, over a piece of pure bread, the deed is done; and Christ, in the sincere belief of every Catholic, is in my power. The reader may object that I cannot do this, because I do not believe I have the power, and belief and intention are essential. But most Catholics would stoutly assert that I *do* believe I have the power, and am not sincere in my profession of scepticism!

Let me repeat that I am not in the least caricaturing or misrepresenting Catholic belief, or describing

an ancient belief which the educated Catholic of to-day does not accept literally. If my pen at times slips into frivolity, the nature of the subject may surely be pleaded in extenuation. The persistence of such beliefs in cities like London, Boston, and New York must excite any normal sense of humour. But the reader will find, on questioning a Catholic, however well educated, that he solemnly believes these things.

I have referred, in passing, to the priest bearing wafers to the laity. This is the ceremony of "holy communion," an advanced version of a primitive practice of receiving the virtues of the god which is well known in savage religions. After consuming his own wafer, the priest bears a gold vessel containing hundreds of smaller wafers, which he has simultaneously consecrated, to a rail at which lay Catholics kneel, with open mouths and closed eyes, to receive Christ. All must be fasting; though how many drops of water—in washing the teeth, for instance—it would take "to break the fast" is disputed.

The ceremony I have described is the "low" or ordinary daily mass. On Sundays and festivals the mass is set to chant and music, and a choir (often composed of "heretics and unbelievers") renders the sacred words, as composed by gifted opera writers like Gounod and Rationalists like Mozart and Beethoven. To any thoughtful observer, who quite understands the central belief of the rite, the performance then becomes ludicrous in the extreme. Rome has several times seen the profanity of this operatic performance, and endeavoured to restrict the music to a simple and solemn chant. But this "High Mass" is the chief money-gathering ceremony of the day, and the most attractive to non-Catholics so that the Church has in this case successfully resisted the reforming zeal of one or two modern Popes.

Such is "the unbloody sacrifice of the mass," as the Church calls it; but we have not yet done with the eucharist A special large wafer is consecrated and reserved in the "tabernacle"; a safe, with highly ornamental front, in the middle of the altar. A second silver or gold vessel in the safe—for burglars have little respect for beliefs—contains small wafers to be taken to the bedridden. In Catholic countries this is done processionally, with bell and candle; but in Protestant lands the priest dare show no outward sign of his awful burden. Many a priest whom you meet walking, in what seems to the profane eye a quite ordinary way, along the streets of London or Manchester has God in his vest-pocket. The large wafer in the tabernacle, which explains the red lamp before the altar and the deep reverences of the more pious Catholics in church, is taken out on Sunday night and set, above the altar, in a jewelled gold vessel; though the jewels are almost invariably glass, and the gold is washed silver. At the close the priest blesses the people with the vessel, so that the ceremony is popularly known as "Benediction."

This is the doctrine, this the possession, on which Catholics pride themselves above their neighbours. It is to communicate this priceless blessing to the benighted non-Catholic that the zeal of the faithful is stirred, and the laity are enlisted by the clergy in the work of "conversion." I leave it to the reader to say if there is in the whole range of modern life a more marvellous illustration of intellectual stupor; a more singular ground for sectarian vanity; a more weird survival in a civilized age of primitive belief and practice.

The sacrament of "confirmation" proceeds on the admirable theory that when young folk attain, or approach, the age of puberty they need "confirming" —that is to say, strengthening. It may seem ungracious to cavil, but one wonders why the Almighty

grants this strength only through a bishop, and as part of a very antique and—to the young folk—totally unintelligible ritual. All that I recollect of my confirmation-day is that a portly bishop read a vast amount of mysterious Latin, and then lightly daubed each of us on the forehead with a very sacred oil; and there were so many of us, and he was so hurried, that he stuck an episcopal finger in my eye. The "sacrament" is, of course, merely a part of the system which raises a priestly caste, to their great advantage, above the common crowd.

So it is with the sacrament of "holy orders," or the ordination of the clergy. The ritual is a maze, a stupendous collection of archaic prayers and mystic actions, to the onlooker. It is supposed to be so potent that henceforward the priest can order devils about, forgive sins, and turn bread into Christ. This your Catholic neighbour literally believes.

The sacrament of "matrimony" requires little discussion. For at least six centuries after the establishment of Christianity the laity obstinately refused to submit their marriages to the clergy, and they freely used the right of divorce. The notion of a divine institution of *this* sacrament is a wonderful piece of audacity. It was men like Hildebrand, completing the enslavement of the people to the priests, who at last secured for the Church complete control of marriage. As a "sacrament" the new type of marriage was indissoluble; and the morality of countries where the Church still resists the right to dissolve unhappy marriages tells its own story. The whole thing is part of the determination of the priests to rule and to exact fees.

"Extreme unction" (or last anointing) is the final "channel of grace." It is given only in grave danger of death, so that, when the priest announces his intention to inflict it, the Catholic's chief thought is: "My God, has it come to that?" Essentially it is

the daubing of the eyes, ears, mouth, hands, and feet of the dying person with one of the many sacred greases; the accompanying Latin formula charms away the sins committed by those members. In the naïve Middle Ages the loins also were anointed! Our more refined age has discovered that Christ did not really insist on that.

These are six of the seven sacraments, the glory and distinctive flower of Catholic belief, the most elaborate system of magic which any civilized religion ever invented. From first to last they are designed to enhance the power and prestige of the clergy. In their ritual and their fundamental ideas they are as alien from, as antagonistic to, the whole spirit of modern times as is alchemy or astrology. This is the set of beliefs to which the simple Catholic believes he will one day convert the whole United Kingdom! In fine, this is the set of beliefs which God, the Catholic says, was so deeply concerned to maintain in their purity that he overlooked all the horrors of the Middle Ages and all the corruption of the Popes and the Papacy! But I have still to consider "the sacrament of penance," the most remarkable element of a truly remarkable system.

Chapter III

THE CONFESSIONAL AND INDULGENCES

If there is one part of the Catholic system which more than any other has attracted the attention of non-Catholics, it is what the Church calls " the sacrament of penance," and others call the practice of confession. No part of a church is observed by the visitor with such keen interest as " the box," as the priest familiarly calls the little chamber in which he hears confessions. No other Catholic practice has drawn from rabid opponents so much scorn and obloquy as this; yet no practice has seemed more defensible to those sympathetic outsiders who admire Catholicism at a distance.

In the scheme of sacraments penance comes second. The Catholic seems to take an unflattering view of the Almighty when he lays it down that a child of seven may commit so deadly a sin that he will burn for ever, but this is the principle for determining the age at which confession begins. There is no obligation at any time to confess light (or " venial ") sins. It is those (the " mortal " sins) which, in the Church's scheme, are punishable with eternal fire that must be confessed. Such are practically all sexual offences (in word, thought, or deed), and a long category of transgressions down to " missing mass on Sunday morning." The Catholic prayer-book contains a full list of these expensive acts of revolt, and the penitent runs his eye over the list and prepares his account before he enters " the box."

To the child of seven, and to decent children of much later years, this list is a vague, thrilling, awe-

inspiring list of the things he (or she) may do when he grows up. His curiosity is stimulated I have, in hearing the confessions of children, more than once heard them say: "Please, father, I have committed adultery." They were probably attempting to learn the meaning of that mysterious sin. The whole performance is useless and stupid in the case of children. It merely "breaks them in." From that moment they must at least once a year, under pain of eternal damnation, kneel at the feet of a priest and confess their sins.

It is quite obvious that, like the sacrament of marriage, this also was, in the main, instituted in order to bring the laity under more perfect control. The practice of public confession in the early Church soon proved too great an obstacle to conversions in the Roman world. Indeed, the heavier sins of the flesh were in those days deemed quite unpardonable, and this inhuman belief could not survive. The reader may remember a Pope Callistus, of the third century, who incurred the terrible scorn of Tertullian. His fault was not so much the assumption of the title of "Bishop of Bishops," though Tertullian repeats this with ringing irony, as his claim that he could absolve even from adultery and fornication. Tertullian calmly relegated such folk to hell for the first offence. But Callistus had to deal with Romans, and he softened the discipline, and the modification was generally adopted.

There was, however, for ages, no *obligation* to confess, just as there was no obligation to marry in church. It was not until the Lateran Council of the year 1216 that Catholics were compelled to seek absolution from a priest once a year. It will be recollected that that was the period of the greatest extension of priestly and Papal power over the people—the period from Hildebrand to Innocent III. To attribute this to priestcraft alone would be an historical error.

These men were very sincerely concerned for the morals of Europe Even they, however, were equally concerned to extend the power of the clergy, and for each such prelate of entirely unworldly views there were fifty who looked primarily to the increase of their prestige and wealth

We remember the state of the clergy at that time and for centuries afterwards They were quite generally ignorant, drunken, and immoral Bishops whose books have reached us censure their priests repeatedly for frequenting taverns—which were commonly loose houses in those days—and brothels, and for scandals with their people and servants; and probably the bulk of bishops were too free in their own lives to care about their clergy. The result was that the confessional became very largely a new occasion of licence. I am, however, not concerned with the history of these things In Mr. H. C Lea's *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences* the reader will find much interesting information. I am concerned with Catholicism to-day

I remember still the awe and peculiar nervous tension of beginning, about forty years ago, that wonderful experience. It was somewhere in prosy Tottenham, I believe. The "confessional," it may be wise to explain, is divided into two compartments. Priest and penitent cannot touch each other. But into the wooden partition a metal gauze, about two feet square, is inserted; and through this the penitent whispers into the ear of the "confessor" I sat in silence for a time, and my heart thumped when the door at last opened and I heard the light swish of skirts against the woodwork. You give your blessing, you ask how long since the last confession, and then you listen to the catalogue. . . . It was in this case mercifully light, and, after a few words of exhortation, I made the magic sign of the cross in the air, and repeated the solemn formula of

absolution: not "God absolves thee," but "*I* absolve thee from thy sins" It was Tottenham, a suburb of London, a London maid of twenty-four or so—I never saw her face—and a small-minded, raw youth of twenty-four usurping the function of God and forgiving sin! In Tottenham, a suburb of London, in the last decade of the nineteenth century!

But there was little harm, some may comment. It happens that there was little harm to me, for I was at the time, by some freak of constitution, and for two years afterwards, still sexually immature. But listen to the next experience

A few days later my name was duly posted over a "box" in my own church. People were notified that the quiet youth they saw at times at the altar—I was never a parish priest, and I mingled little with the people—had attained the august power. I was summoned, I sat in my box, and there was again a swish of skirts against the woodwork. The story she had to tell was to me a nightmare which haunted me for months She had had for years a *liaison* with one of my fellow priests I afterwards knew both of them: she a girl hardly out of her teens—he had seduced her at sixteen—and he a middle-aged fleshy friar, who sat at table daily with me! She had, she said, never dared to confide it to any before, and for an hour I had to listen to every sordid detail of the long *liaison* She spiritually gloated over the telling, repeated and elaborated, and would be quite sure that I understood and absolved everything And when I reeled at the close, sick, into the monastery, a colleague met me at the door, looked stolidly into my eyes, and asked bluntly: "Well, how did you like Maud [1] and her story?"

[1] I alter the real name. It must not be thought that I am improperly breaking confidence in such reminiscences. It is agreed that priests may repeat matter of confession when there is no danger of identification. This case we often discussed.

I had at once stumbled upon one of the morbid victims of the sacramental system! The girl's story was true, but, in her itching for legitimate sexual talk, she had told it in the same way to "every priest in London," one of my older colleagues said. After a time she became, without her name being mentioned in the public discussions, a theme of conversation; and when the priest I had in my mind as her lover died, and it was openly said that Miss —— —— was in hysterics, the story was rounded.

In four years' experience of the ghastly ordeal this first impression was amply confirmed. Catholics are no worse, and no better, than others. In the small middle-class suburb where I heard confessions the majority of my penitents were decent folk, decently discharging the unpleasant obligation laid upon them by the Church. I had many friends among them; though from the day that honesty compelled me to leave their Church not one ever offered a syllable of sympathy in my heavy struggles, and they have listened with composure to the scandalous lies their priests whispered about me. That is the distorting effect of the system. But I would place it frankly on record that they were a fine and kindly folk, and that the habit of confessing neither bettered nor degraded them as a body.

The majority of Catholic young women are neither better nor worse than their age and sex. They dislike the confessional, and restrict themselves to what they *must* say. But a large number of them, even of fairly good character, are seduced—slightly at first—by the consecrated pruriency of the business. They would shrink from telling their intimate feelings and occasional mild lapses from the strict canons of virtue even to a father or brother. It would be "immodest." But, instead of being immodest, it is highly proper to talk about such things, as fully as they like, to a priest, however young. The nuns and lady-teachers

who prepare them, when they are young, for the confessional, impress upon them that they *must* speak in detail. A priest would *sin himself*—I fear I have a grave account under this head—if he let them off with a general statement that they had been "rude" or "immodest." He must ask questions. Was it solitary misconduct? If so, to what extent did it go? If otherwise, to what extent did it go, and was the partner in vice a relative, a priest, a married man?

I remember many types: from a youngster of fifteen, of strict family, who admitted that she and her like sometimes conspired to ask me such questions as the propriety of interrupting the night-prayers to answer a call of nature, to a fleshy young woman of quite uncontrolled life who brought a weekly budget of all conceivable phases of sexual misconduct, and would expound them to me with casuistic thoroughness. Of course, she was always "sorry," or I could not have absolved her; but the extensive and lurid catalogue was the same next week. Such people do not as a rule confess except once a year, when there is a grave obligation. This enterprising young lady confessed that she had casually discovered the "comfort" of confessing to me, and seemed disposed to do it almost daily. Others obviously experienced the same spiritual comfort. It was probably such things that prematurely awoke my own sex-life at the age of twenty-six (Catholic legend makes me a thorough-paced scoundrel long before that), or I might have been a Hildebrand: Scarcely a year afterwards I ceased to hear the confessions of women. Though I was not yet a convinced sceptic, I loathed the confessional, and had to be driven to it; and I presently got the rectorship of a college in the country where there were no Catholic women.

Some readers will ask what truth there is in the stories of priests abusing the confessional. There is much truth. The priest need not, and does not

always, hear confessions in the official place, where abuse is impossible. People ring a bell at a door near the sanctuary-end of the church to ask for the priest, when they would confess, and they may (rarely) be invited inside. A confession is valid anywhere. The *liaison* to which I referred was chiefly carried on in this way. Another priestly Don Juan, who told me his adventures, used to get young women to feign illness, and take to their beds and send for him. But as a rule the immoral priest, and he is numerous, does not need to resort to these melodramatic arrangements. His afternoon visits to houses open a field which a Sybarite might envy.

I am, therefore, not stressing the immorality of the confessional. It no doubt helps some people; it rather debases others; it is just a painful necessity, doing neither good nor harm, to the great majority. Its essential evil is its almost incredible stupidity. Its central idea—the forgiveness of sin by a youth whose hands have been oiled—is grotesque. It is not even, as sentimental people outside the Church sometimes imagine, a good human device for promoting morality. Catholics do not rush to it to have "the burden of sin" lifted from their depressed hearts. They dislike it. The young flippantly call it "scraping the kettle." Very few would do it if it were not for the obligation.

It may be asked why most Catholics confess at least once a month if they dislike it, yet are bound to confess only once a year. This is achieved by a modern extension of the priest's power. We shall see later that there are "societies" or "confraternities" for each category of a priest's parishioners. The young women, for instance, are banded together as "Children of Mary." The boys, the youths, etc., have similar "confraternities." Membership is voluntary, but a youth or maid might as well leave the Church outright as refuse to join. It would not pay

socially. And it is the invariable rule of these societies that the members must confess once a month. Thus a "voluntary" monthly confession is easily secured.

As to the related subject of "indulgences," the Catholic may here have a ground for complaint of misrepresentation; though I will show presently that *his own priests misrepresent the facts to him.* The doctrine is peculiar. The Church of the early Middle Ages made hell so very hot and long that human nature rebelled. So a middle state, a *temporary* hell, was invented, and called Purgatory. People who had sinned were not quite fit for heaven, even if their sins had been "absolved." They must be "purged" of the last trace of stain in "the fires of Purgatory." Catholics, of course, with their immense capacity of belief, still cling literally to the "flames" and other horrors of hell and purgatory. They sing still in every church in the world:—

> Pray for the holy souls that burn
> This hour amidst the cleansing flames.

But purgatory also seemed rather horrible when the mind of Europe became a little refined. Dante, in his *Purgatory,* throws Catholic theology to the winds, and boldly conceives it, not as a place of torture, but as a place where souls voluntarily purify themselves. The theologians found this too rationalistic, too human; and they modified the dogma in their own way. They said that the Church could make out a sort of draft on the "merits of Christ," and shorten or cancel the suffering in purgatory. This is the meaning of an "indulgence." It is not a licence to commit sin—though such things have been known—but "a remission of the *temporal* punishment due to sin [in purgatory] after the guilt has been forgiven." My penitents, for instance, knew that after I had waved my magic hand over them they need not, if they were sorry for their

misdeeds, fear hell. But they still had purgatory to fear, and to escape this they needed "indulgences." They might get a "plenary" indulgence (wiping out the whole debt) or a partial indulgence expressed in a popular measure of fifty or a hundred days, and so on.

It would take a volume to tell all the weird developments of this doctrine. The Catholic enters a church and dips his fingers in the stoup of "holy water": fifty days off his sentence, besides the efficacy of the water in keeping devils away. He kneels before some altar, and says a certain prayer or pays for a twopenny candle: a hundred or two hundred days off. He wears under his shirt a blessed medal or some similar charm or charms: another hundred days off, besides a problematic protection against drowning, etc. It goes on all his life.

Periodically he gets a "plenary" indulgence. On one day in the year (called "Portiuncula") a man gets a "plenary" indulgence *every time* he enters a church attached to a Franciscan friary and says a short prayer. I lived near one such (at Manchester) in my boyhood, and we worked heroically all day. Men, women, and children, we bobbed in and out of that church all day long. We pitted our records against each other. Crowds came from all parts of Manchester for the glorious free privilege. You could hardly cross the threshold for legs, as one naturally remained near the door so as to get in and out so many times in the hour. Outside there were booths selling beads, scapulars, medals, and other indulgence-laden curiosities. The incredulous reader may witness this for himself at any Franciscan chapel on the first of August; in London, Manchester, or New York, in the twentieth century!

But, you may ask, why so many plenary indulgences? If *one* clears the account against you, why get several? Why bother about a paltry "fifty

days"? For two reasons. First, because the indulgence is a quite genuine offer *if* your "disposition" is perfect; but the priest will tell you that it never is. So you must keep on trying your luck. You may hit the psychological conditions some time, especially with the easier indulgences. The language of the theologian is, of course, more stately and reverent than this, but it comes to the same thing. And the second reason opens out a still wider field. You can apply your "indulgence" to some dead person who is already in the "cleansing flames." When you have exhausted your Catholic relatives and friends—non-Catholic relatives and friends are probably past help—there is the whole army of millions of burning souls. The field for charity is illimitable. It is hardly less vast than the field for credulity.

Are the indulgences "sold"? That they have been literally sold we saw in the case of John XXIII. The condemnation of the Pope, however, reminds us that this is not in accordance with Catholic doctrine. Indulgences must *not* be sold. But, as my professor of theology used genially to observe, the theologian never made a law that he could not defeat. The methods are various. Little wax figures of lambs —Agnus Dei's, the Catholic calls them—are blessed by the Pope, enclosed in a sort of sling to be worn round the neck, and sold. You pay, of course, only for the material, transport, etc.; but not at cost price. Medals and other pious objects are similarly enriched with indulgences and sold. You can go into a "Catholic repository" (you hurt their feelings if you call it a shop, though it looks very much like one) and buy two pounds' worth of these articles; and the total indulgences you can get from them will run to the life of Methusaleh. You can kiss a holy relic; and there is almost always a collecting-plate beside it.

This is Catholicism modernized—"Americanized,"

an Italian would say—or made clean and reasonable. For the genuine article, which (Catholics assure you) you cannot get in heretical countries, you must go to backward parts of South America. Only a few years ago you need not have gone farther than Spain, but the materialistic spirit of our age is destroying these fine old Catholic practices. Enter a Catholic "repository," or even plain bookshop, and ask for a *bula*. "Yes, señor," says the shopman, "which *bula* —*de difuntos*, *de composicion*, *de carnes*, or the other?" He means: Do you want a *bula* conferring a plenary indulgence upon yourself, or a *bula* conferring a plenary indulgence on a dead friend, or a *bula* releasing you from the fasts of the church, or a *bula* permitting you to keep with a safe conscience any ill-gotten property you may have? You want an indulgence-*bula*, you pay 75 *centesimos* (sixpence), and you get your change.

I have before me copies of each of these four *bulas*. They were bought for me in Madrid by an American citizen. I had, though a trained and travelled theologian, absolutely refused to believe him when he first told me of them. When I in turn published the facts, English and American Catholics indignantly denied them. One London Catholic offered to leave the Church if the facts could be established, but he changed his mind when he saw the *bulas*, and said that he would inform Rome and get the scandal stopped. After sending several unanswered letters to the Vatican he at length got a curt note to the effect that "any priest would explain to him that the indulgences were not *sold*." The man concluded that it was the people who were "sold," and, I believe, left the Church. A well-known American ecclesiastic wrote in an American journal that I was "a liar"; since, being a trained theologian and knowing the facts, I must have deliberately told an untruth.

There is no doubt that these facts are not confided

to the Catholics of America, England, and Germany, when they are assured that indulgences are not, and never were, sold. The "explanation" of them is too risky. One priest ventured to say that the price paid was for the paper and printing. They are small squares of the cheapest paper in existence, and would cost a few pence a hundred. They are sold at from fivepence to a shilling each. Another suggested that it was a local abuse, curiously overlooked by the zealous Papacy. The sale is, on the contrary, as the *bulas* tell, authorized afresh each year by the Vatican. A herald announced in Madrid each year the arrival of the Papal authorization; the *bulas*, signed by the Archbishop of Seville, were dated each year, and served for only that year; and it is known that until a recent date at least the Vatican took a proportion of the vast receipts, and probably still did until they were abolished.

When my original article had caused serious trouble among English Catholics, who were astounded, the Jesuit Father S. Smith wrote a little work, *Are Indulgences Sold in Spain?* It admits the facts, but denies the propriety of calling the transaction "a sale." Your money is an "alms"; the indulgence is "a gift." (As I have said, it looks very much like getting a drink in America when you could not "buy" one.) It is a transparent subterfuge. The plain truth is that the Church, which reformed itself by its own internal spirituality in the sixteenth century, continued to do behind the shelter of the Pyrenees and in Spanish America what it dare no longer do under the eyes of Protestants.

Two of the *bulas* I mentioned will puzzle the reader, and I may briefly repeat the explanation I have given elsewhere. The *bula de carnes*, which costs fivepence, permits the lucky Spaniard to eat meat on all the fast-days of the Church except a few of the greater fast-days. He thinks he owes this privilege

to the superiority of his piety to that of the American or English Catholic.

The fourth *bula*, popularly known as "the thieves' *bula*," is delicious. It costs a shilling. The archbishop, on it, solemnly assures the purchaser that if he has any stolen property, and does not at the time know the name and address of the owner (and burglars and pickpockets do not register these things), the *bula* clears his distressed conscience and makes it his! But if the property exceeds twelve shillings in value, he must take out new *bulas*, one for each twelve shillings. If, in fine, the property is worth more than twenty-five pounds, he must go to a priest and "make a composition"; in other words, give a tithe to the Church! This is the "social" efficacy, the "spiritual" atmosphere, of "genuine" Catholicism. Ask your Catholic neighbour how he likes it.

I have said that an indulgence is not a licence to commit sin. But in practice it comes remarkably near to such a licence. It is said by travellers in Spain that, when you expostulate with a naughty Spaniard, he often retorts: "*Tengo la bula para todos*" ("I have a *bula* to cover everything"). He does not mean that he has bought permission to sin. But he does mean that he has bought deliverance from the consequences, which is much the same thing to him. He has but to confess his sins, and the *bula* does the rest. "How to be happy though sinful" would be a good title for a handbook by the Spanish Church. And the Spanish Church is the Church of the Middle Ages, living still.

Purgatory is the most lucrative doctrine ever revealed to the Church. From the days when Boniface VIII, murderer and adulterer and sceptic, piously permitted English and German Catholics to get the same indulgences as the Romans, if they paid into his treasury the price of a journey to Rome, it has yielded

incalculable millions. In the saying of "masses" alone it still brings the Catholic Church of America—I mean the United States, not Mexico or Chile—a sum of one or two millions sterling a year. It yields the Catholic Church in England about a quarter of a million a year. Let me conclude by showing how this is done.

The mass is, technically, a "sacrifice," and the Catholic may have this sacrifice offered for his particular benefit—for his "intention," to use the proper phrase—just as the Jew could once have a sheep or a goat sacrificed for him. The "intention" may be recovery from illness, a hope of better profits from business, or anything. It is generally to get an "indulgence" for a dead relative. And, of course, it costs money. The Church fixes a minimum tariff. In Latin countries, where orders abound and the scale of living is low, the minimum is a *lira* or *peseta*—say eight or ten pence. The rich are compelled by public opinion, gently stimulated by the clergy, to give more. In England the minimum is half-a-crown; in America a dollar; and in both lands to give the bare minimum is a confession of poverty. From several years' experience in England I should say the average is about four shillings a mass; and as there are 3,865 priests saying mass daily, that yields about £250,000 a year. In the States the annual yield must be about a million or two sterling. And as England and America grow more and more pious, and orders are more numerous and of a higher tariff, the superfluous orders are sent to Mexico or Italy or Spain, and worked off at ninepence each; and the English or American priest pockets the difference. This is not forbidden.

Far be it from me to suggest that this has anything to do with the stupendous zeal of the clergy and the Vatican for the "conversion" of England and America! I do but tell facts, as respectfully

as my itching pen will. These are facts. This is the " priceless treasure " of the Catholic faith. This is the Church *outside* which there is no salvation. This is the state of things that the " supernatural gift " helped the Papacy to establish, and was so concentrated in keeping " pure and undefiled " that it could not attend to the morals of pontiffs.

Chapter IV

CATHOLIC SERVICES

The services that I have so far noticed are conducted entirely in Latin, and the language of the priest is, as a rule, as inaudible to the people as it would be unintelligible. This has its advantages. The fact that the "mass" is in Latin saves considerable time, as we saw, since the priest seems to think that in Latin he is justified in addressing the Almighty at the rate of 250 or 300 words a minute; whereas, if he spoke a language which the people could hear and understand, he would feel compelled to speak at least as reverently as if he were addressing a belted earl, or a wealthy countess of advanced years. It has the advantage, too, that the ears of the better educated part of a modern congregation are spared a language which might otherwise stir in them feelings of revolt. The whole liturgy, for instance, swarms with allusions to devils, who are supposed to hover about; and the educated Catholic probably has his doubts if those industrious and enigmatic agents do really abound in London and New York.

The priest himself is probably grateful, as a rule, that the Church insists on keeping these rather crude and worm-eaten sentiments under the veil of a dead language. I never knew a priest who really believed these things. Every priest has at times to bless the "holy water" with which Catholics sprinkle themselves, or are sprinkled. The prayer by which he does this intimates that its object really is to drive the devils out of this common London water, and in-

directly keep them from the people sprinkled. I say that I never met a priest who sincerely thought this necessary; but one did not seem to mind doing it in Latin. It would be rather crude and trying in English.

As to the people, while they certainly believe implicitly the doctrines I have described in the last chapter, they treat the devil in rather cavalier fashion. At the beginning of a sung mass on Sunday, for instance, the priest must walk down the church and, with a sprinkler and holy water, do a preliminary devil-chase. Zealous and simple in all things, I, when it was my turn, took care that every lady in the church should have her share of the beneficent water, and I sprinkled generously. After a few Sunday hats had been spoiled, I noticed that people waited in the vestibule or outside until my zeal had expended itself. Indeed, in the end they begged my superior to hint to me—not quite in these terms—that they would rather take the risk of the devil and save their hats.

In many such matters the retention of Latin is a merciful dispensation. I have described baptism, but there is a supplementary ceremony, commonly called "churching," which even more urgently needs the decent veil of a dead language. The idea of it is that a married woman who has so far demeaned herself as to add a little citizen to the community is tainted. She is not fit to enter the church with respectable folk. She must remain in the space near the door, where once public penitents stood, and where inquisitive Protestant visitors stand to-day. But she does not do this during a public service. She comes quietly some afternoon, kneels in the penitential area, and is "churched." If ever the prayers that are used—crudely referring to the indelicate antecedents of her condition—are read in English, the archaic ceremony will die in a year.

The reader must not, however, suppose that the services which *are* conducted in English are entirely free from these ancient crudities. Both prayers and hymns, but especially hymns, are occasionally intolerable in phrasing and sentiment. Perhaps the most popular of Catholic prayers is a prayer to Mary, called, from its opening words, "the Hail Mary." It is one of the first things the little ones learn to lisp; and it talks good Elizabethan English about Mary's position. "Blessed be the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," is the central phrase of it. At what age the little girls begin to understand what they are saying I cannot tell; but a child who spoke thus to her mother or her brother would cause a sensation.

Somehow, they are so accustomed to unreality and eccentricity in the Church language that these things do not seem to matter. Fragments of the hymns of my boyhood linger in my memory, and the thing that startles me now is that they did not startle me then. Two notes, I now perceive, were the most persistent. One was the devil-theory. The world was one vast Colosseum, in which, from our seventh year onward, we fought innumerable and stupendously ingenious and fearfully zealous devils. No ancient Persian or modern uneducated Chinaman could be more concerned. One lyric, set to a gloriously martial tune, drew out all our lungs:

> Arm for deadly fight, earth and hell unite,
> And swear in lasting bonds to bind me;
> Raise the cross on high, Jesus is our cry,
> With Jesus still the foe shall find me.

Then we dispersed to play marbles, or to steal fruit out of the priest's garden.

There was another hymn which the "children of Mary" used especially to sing. Two or three hundred young men and women in the bloom of life used to pour it into the rafters with tremendous

spirit. The music lent itself to emphasis, and it invariably got it. Was it a prayer for the preservation, the decent development, the manly use of their adolescent strength? Not in the least. The refrain of it, rising to a piteous wail, was this:

> Holy Mary, let me come; Holy Mary, let me come
> Soon to be happy with thee in thy home.

There was not one of them who would not have fainted if a voice from heaven had announced that the prayer was granted.

It seemed possible that even in the course of twenty years some of these monstrosities have been suppressed, and I have consulted a modern American hymnal (Tozer's, 1906) that is available. No; there are all the poetic gems of my childhood, and a few more. Catholics still yearn unspeakably to quit this world, it seems! Here is one which we sang in a dingy suburb of Manchester fifty years ago, and that Catholics, even of Fifth Avenue, sing in New York to-day (No. 168):

> O Paradise, O Paradise,
> 'Tis weary waiting here;
> I long to be where Jesus is,
> To feel, to see him near.

Or the jingle numbered 100:

> The earth is but a vale of tears,
> O Maria!
> . . . .
> When this exile is complete,
> O Maria!

The same reason is generally assigned as in the older hymns: the earth is a vale of tears, millions of devils are on our track (several to each of the two thousand million members of the human race, I calculate), and the chances of hell are merely prolonged the longer we live here. "Hell is raging for my soul,"

says No. 96; and the reason of the rage is no more apparent than the concern of the victim when he quits church and gets into Hyde Park. Unreality seems to be the first qualification of a good Catholic hymn. Listen to this extremely popular doggerel, which has been sung throughout the English-speaking world with tremendous spirit for forty years or more, to my knowledge (No. 113):

O mother, I could weep for mirth,
Joy fills my heart so fast;
My soul to-day is heaven on earth,
O could the transport last!

Is it the hymeneal of some fortunate Child of Mary who is about to marry? No. The young ladies are expressing in this hyperbolic bad poetry their appreciation of the fact that Mary did not incur the guilt of Adam's sin when she was born! The quality of the poetry is, in fact, frequently as bad as the sentiments:

O the blood of Christ! it
Soothes the Father's ire;
Opes the gates of heaven,
Quells eternal fire.

One could write such verse as this in a state of intoxication. And this, remember, is an American, modern, expurgated collection of hymns. This is the best output for a century of the Church which claims a monopoly of religious and artistic inspiration!

These hymns and a few prayers are almost all that the Church suffers in the native tongue. The prayers generally relate to the Virgin and the saints, and the worship of these now calls for consideration.

Rome still sends out yearly innumerable bits of saints' bones, and so forth, because every altar that is raised has to have a "relic" embedded in it; and every relic has to be bought of the Vatican—I mean, you must pay for the case, the wrappings, the

carriage, etc. These modern relics are accompanied by very impressive certificates and diplomas, which often prove the existence of the particular relic right into the Middle Ages. The Catholic, having a feeble sense of humour, does not notice that such documents merely trace the object back to the period when the forging of relics was at its height. There can be little doubt, however, that the profitable industry has not been suffered to die out altogether. I have seen in London a Jesuit priest selling (I mean "giving"—for half a sovereign) to pious ladies relics of a certain saint, and it turned out, when we pressed him (for he was poaching on our particular preserve), that they were bogus. He had them from Rome.

The "cult" or "worship" of Mary has a peculiar position in the Church. The earliest Christian centuries knew nothing of it, and in its beginning it incurred the frowns of some of the Christian leaders. As time went on, however, her figure was brought into prominence by the great quarrel about the divinity of Christ. She was very popular in the Middle Ages. Pope Alexander VI is especially noted for his warm devotion to her. The peculiar thing is that, while so many practices paled in modern times, as stars pale when the sun rises, the cult of Mary rose higher and higher. Pius IX had no less devotion to her than Alexander VI. He got her declared "Immaculate," which led to the "transports" mentioned in the American hymn.

And, as is known, it is just in this one department that they have revived, and stubbornly profess, the medieval belief in miracles.

They occur at many shrines of Mary, but Lourdes, with its commercial organisation, has nearly blotted out rival miracle shops. It is altogether a mistake to suppose that these "miracles" of Lourdes are the innocent illusion of peasants who defy doctors, and of overfed old ladies who get their little ills attended

to there. No Catholic is *bound* to believe them, but even the most cultivated Catholics do. Mr. Hilaire Belloc once paralysed me, in the course of a debate on "miracles" which I had with him and Mr. Chesterton, by sternly and truculently insisting that the cures at Lourdes are literally miraculous! One notices here again the strange lack of a sense of humour and proportion. The supposed supernatural power at Lourdes could vindicate itself any day, and every day. It could, on Mr. Belloc's theory, raise the dead to life as easily as curing a bunion. It could, as was frequently done in the Middle Ages, when there were no sceptics, fit on again a foot or arm that has been chopped off. But it plays about in that dim region of gradual cures and disputable maladies where natural and supernatural powers are hopelessly indistinguishable. It is a typical medieval survival, or revival.

Mr. Belloc, by the way, insisted in his severe way that the essence of miracles is their "rareness." He rebuked my frivolity as strongly as Mr. Chesterton rebukes my solemnity. A few weeks later Lourdes published its annual report—not balance-sheet, but list of miracles. It claimed more than two thousand in a year! Naturally, if the chances of each sick visitor were as low as Mr. Belloc thinks, the nostrum would not pay. The financial aspect of the matter is as patent as the interest of the rival medieval towns which fought battles because each claimed the Virgin's wedding-ring, and thus lowered the attractiveness to pious tourists of the other.[1]

But these few illustrations will suffice for my purpose. Catholicism is not merely an archaic system of rites and beliefs which people cherish for its historical or æsthetic interest. It is not merely in the Latin ritual or in the Latin tomes of its theologians

[1] As to the value of the "miracles" see my little work, analyzing the chief cases, *The Lourdes Miracles* (Watts & Co.).

that you read the extraordinary ideas which distinguish it. It is not merely Mexican or Irish peasants who subscribe to these things. You hear them in quite modern English in Westminster Cathedral. You hear them from the lips of literary men and judges. The reader will feel that some explanation of this " Catholic atmosphere " is needed, and to that I next address myself.

Chapter V

THE CATHOLIC ATMOSPHERE

One of the cherished phrases of those expert phrase-makers, the leaders of the Catholic clergy, is "the Catholic atmosphere." Catholics must have their own journals, their own literature, their own science and art, their own clubs, their own schools—even, to judge by the trade-columns in their journals, their own sausages and *lingerie*. They must live in a "Catholic atmosphere." And the reader will now be quite prepared to believe that they do. What is it, and how is it manufactured?

The first constituent of this Catholic atmosphere —its oxygen, so to say—is the distinction between the world and the Catholic world. It is like the distinction between truth and Catholic truth. The world, we saw, is, in the opinion of a Catholic, a compound of Edgar Allan Poe and the *Arabian Nights*; a place of evil genii and horrors, a "vale of tears" from which one yearns to be released, a Bridge of Sighs, a death-trap, a chaos of wickedness, a furious and relentless enemy of the Holy Catholic Church. This is the language of modern Papal encyclicals, hymns, prayer-books, and sermons; not merely of the writings of St. Bernard or Innocent III.

The reader will no doubt object that here I depart from the tone of moderation and scrupulous accuracy which I have so far sustained. His Catholic neighbour does *not* behave as if he believed this. He does not glance nervously down the street when he issues

from his house, and so on. I have allowed that in this respect the Catholic does not believe more than half of what he addresses to the Almighty in hymns and prayers, or what he reads in Papal encyclicals. But he does believe half of it. His three traditional enemies are "the world, the flesh, and the devil," and he is as sure of the first and third as of the second. All this exaggerated language has, and is intended to have, a certain effect. It leaves the Catholic vaguely convinced that the priceless and beneficent action of the Church throughout the ages is thwarted by the "world" and the devil.

What is the world? Simply you and I. Inanimate nature, even the cows and cats, have no grudge against the Church. It is the non-Catholic humans who make up this hostile world. Many of them are now generally acknowledged to be "in good faith"; but, of course, they are unacquainted with the glories of Catholic belief and practice, or they would at once enter the Church. Let me repeat that I am not caricaturing. This is familiar Catholic language. The task of the Church is to instruct them in its glories, to "convert" them. But here the wicked element of the world thwarts it. Sometimes the devil uses quite well-meaning but ignorant Protestants. Sometimes—very largely, in fact—men think they can enjoy disordered lives better outside the Church (a curious illusion), and so they remain out. But the chief Satanic manifestation, the world in its most vicious shape, is the anti-Catholic writer; above all the apostate priest, who, of course, secretly believes in Catholicism, but is moved by some mad and mysterious rage against it and will have his reward.

This childish attitude is really the common Catholic outlook; and the reader will begin to see the ingenuity of the system. Drench your people with very emphatic assurances that these writers of the

"world" are melodramatic ruffians, pursuing innocence out of sheer devilry, or, at the best, very poor-brained and quite ignorant scribblers; and the majority will not want to read them.

The advertiser of Jones's soap tells you that you are in grave danger of contracting an eruption of the skin if you allow yourself to be seduced by the lying advertisements of Brown's soap. But the advertiser of the Catholic faith says you are in grave danger of eternal damnation if you merely *read the advertisements* of the other firm!

That is the practical outcome of the matter. One Church alone in the civilized world tells you that you run a grave risk of burning eternally if you read what other Churches say about it or about themselves. One Church alone puts the reading of criticisms of its history and doctrines on a level with sexual indulgence, or even murder. That is the Catholic Church; and it takes this supremely bold step on the strength of its constant, emphatic, solemn distinction between the world and the Catholic world, the truth and Catholic truth. It creates its own atmosphere, and damns all other atmospheres. If a Catholic young man reads a criticism of his Church, or attends a lecture criticizing his Church, he sins as grievously as if he went to a brothel. Nay, on the recognized principles of Catholic theology, he would do far better to visit a prostitute than to read an anti-Catholic book or hear an apostate priest lecture. The one sin can be easily repaired; the other leads to irreparable loss of faith.

As I said on an earlier page, this system is successful with the overwhelming majority of Catholics. They will not read bad (that is to say, critical) books. If it occurs to them that they ought to read the other side, they are assured that Catholic writers faithfully tell them the other side. There is even a trick—it is done in Jesuit churches to-day—of putting a priest

in the congregation during the sermon, so that he may rise from the benches at the close and put the case of the "Atheist" or the Protestant. What he puts is, of course, a miserable dilution or sheer travesty of the other side.

The next step is the slander of anti-Catholic writers. If this seems a more humane procedure than burning them, a proof of real advance, we must remember that the improvement is in "the world," not the Church. Non-Catholics often imagine that the Catholic Church has, like all others, abandoned the idea that heretics ought to be burned. Not in the least. A new tactic in controversy has, it is true, brought about a less truculent attitude towards Protestants—in Protestant countries. There is some hope of their salvation. They are not all relegated to hell with the old cheerfulness. They are "our separated brethren." Rome does not like this language, but it has to overlook it.

With seceders and other classes of opponents the Church is not so accommodating. The contention that they cannot possibly enter heaven, and will most probably all go to hell, does not perhaps pain them. But many of them will be astonished to know that the Church still thirsts for their blood. It is only this wicked modern "world" that saves them from the fate they deserve. Probably the majority of Catholics are as ignorant of this as of the sale of indulgences or the facts of Papal history, and it is advisable to give an authority which cannot be questioned.

The law of the Church—"Canon Law" it is called—is a very large code of laws, on which a certain proportion of the clergy have to specialize. The great majority of the clergy know scarcely more than the laity about it. Treatises and compendiums of it are occasionally issued, and I open one of the most recent and authoritative of these compendiums: the *In-*

stitutiones Juris Ecclesiastici Publici of the Jesuit Father Marianus de Luca (1901). He was a professor of the Papal University at Rome; his work is issued from the Vatican press; it is accompanied by a strong letter of approval from the "liberal" Pope, Leo XIII.

A section deals with the Church's relation to heretics. In the technical sense of Canon Law, a heretic means a seceder from the Church; a man or woman who has been baptized in the Church and has quitted it. It does not mean any person who holds beliefs differing from those of the Church. The essential difference is, of course, that the Church does not recognize "good faith" in a seceder. How could any man of normal intelligence, instructed in those wonderful truths which I have described, ever seriously doubt or disbelieve them? That is the Church's principle and the general Catholic attitude. And the Church draws its own conclusions. I translate them literally from the Latin text of this modern manual of "Public Church Law":

> When the inviolable right of any society begins to be assailed and denied, we have then above all to assert and vindicate it. Now, if ever this was done, it is especially in our age that we see the right of inflicting upon the guilty whatever penalties be necessary, however severe, particularly what is called "the right of the sword," denied to the perfect society, and the death-sentence buried among dead laws. . . . Against these Regalists and their modern followers we affirm that the Church has a coercive power even to the extent of the death-sentence. We start with the vindication of this right for the Church, both on account of opponents who loudly accuse our mother the Church of unjust and wicked action in sentencing heretics to death, especially of putting to death certain leaders of heresy and apostates, and because from the right to inflict capital punishment we easily deduce the right to inflict lesser penalties (vol. i, p. 142).
>
> The death-sentence is a necessary and efficacious means for the Church to attain its end when rebels against it and disturbers of the ecclesiastical unity, especially obstinate heretics and heresiarchs, cannot be restrained by any other

> penalty from continuing to derange the ecclesiastical order and impelling others to all sorts of crime, particularly ecclesiastical crime. . . . When the perversity of one or several is calculated to bring about the ruin of many of its children it is bound effectively to remove it, in such wise that if there be no other remedy for saving its people it can and must put these wicked men to death (vol. i, p. 143).

There are eight pages of this amiable sophistry, making the position of the modern Vatican so plain that even an English or American Jesuit cannot obscure it. A little later, moreover, there is an express section "On Heretics," and ten further pages lament the wickedness of a world which disputes the Church's right to dip its holy hands in their blood. "Unbelievers," it says (p. 270), "who have at one time belonged to the faith, such as heretics and all apostates, may, absolutely and by common law, be visited with corporal punishment, and even death, for deserting the faith, and may be compelled to resume it." But the people who have *not* been baptized in the Catholic faith must not feel too secure. Father de Luca and Leo XIII have an eye on *them*. It seems that "unbelievers" (in the Catholic Church) who live under a Catholic monarch (such as the Vatican hopes some day to see in England and the United States) "are to be *compelled* to accept the faith, if it is possible, so that they may not obstruct the faith, either by blasphemy or by evil persuasion or by open persecution." Once baptized, of course, they come under the law of "heretics." The Church not only may, but must, put them to death.[1]

The wicked world now prevents the Church from carrying out these savage maxims, but it is clear that, if there were any possibility of the Church

[1] In 1918 the Vatican published a new *Code of Canon Law* in which nothing is said about the death-sentence. But this is merely what canonists call "private" not "public" law, and it expressly states that all the old laws which are of "divine right" (as the law of death is described) hold good.

attaining again in the English-speaking world the power it once had, they would be put into force. As this is obviously impossible, the clergy do the best they can. If you cannot remove a "scabby sheep" out of existence altogether, make him so scabby that the healthy members of the flock will keep away from him. Paint him black. In my autobiography (*Twelve Years in a Monastery*) I show with what indecent haste my late sacerdotal colleagues put this machinery in motion against me; and it continues to this day. This might in a Catholic atmosphere be done by bell, book, and candle—by excommunication—but, like the *Index*, this picturesque rite is not now much used. Somehow the sonorous threats do not seem any longer to disturb people. By my secession from the priesthood, for instance, I have incurred (without any special sentence being passed) "major excommunication," which is a really dreadful thing. Yet I have never lost five minutes' sleep over it.

The third chief source of Catholic power is diplomatic and any other kind of intrigue. One generally has to wait a generation to get proof of this, and I have in my works given abundance of such proof. But it goes on incessantly. Any person can judge for himself whether the Catholic Church in England has not had secret dealings with politicians over the Irish Catholic vote and to get places on the honours list. I could at any time produce witnesses to whom Catholics have boasted that they can get into the English Civil Service, which is packed with Irish Catholics, more easily than Protestants, and that they can get immigration laws relaxed in their favour. Others have told me how they have heard priests bully booksellers into putting works of mine out of sight or editors into refraining from reviewing them. I have seen myself a letter from the Westminster Catholic Federation threatening to boycott a publisher

who had advertised me to edit and write a large work—he was compelled to ask me to withdraw after signing the contract—and the same Federation was compelled to apologize in the Agony Column of *The Times* (August 9th, 1929) for boasting of its share in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica.* The intrigue goes on daily from Whitehall to even small towns.

In the United States this phase of the activity of the Church is so notorious that I need scarcely enlarge on it. I was assured in Chicago, the second city of America, by an ex-priest that he went to court with a just ground of complaint of a scandalous libel, and was put out of court by a Catholic judge. Boston and San Francisco are riddled with Catholic intrigue. The course of justice is repeatedly thwarted, offices are corruptly secured, political and other elections are influenced. Priests appeal plaintively in public for their rights as a minority and press the soundness of their American citizenship; and in private they have books like that of Father Marianus de Luca, which lay down, as the official doctrine of the Church, that when *Catholics* are in power religious minorities have no rights whatever, non-Catholic Churches cannot be suffered to exist, anti-Catholic literature cannot be tolerated, and " heretics " must be put to death.

By these means the Catholic laity are not merely kept in a special murky atmosphere which explains their adhesion to the remarkable doctrines I have described, but they are actively enlisted in the work of the Church. There are two hymns which are sung with especial fervour by Catholic congregations. The refrain of one is:

> Faith of our Fathers, living still,
> In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword,
> We will be true to thee till death.

Half the young men who sing this with tremendous vigour are in all other matters than religion trying to get away from the "faith of our fathers." They think it musty, narrow, a stupid relic of the Middle Ages. The refrain of the other hymn is:

God bless our Pope, the great, the good.

As they sing, they seem to have dimly in mind the long line of saintly and august pontiffs who make (Catholic literature tells them) almost a miracle of the history of the Papacy. I have now described the atmosphere in which it is possible for them to retain these childlike beliefs. It remains to discuss the character of the clergy who make that atmosphere.

Note.—The intrigues of the Catholic Church in every country in our own time and its share in bringing on the world-tragedy are fully proved in my *Papacy in Politics To-day* (1937, 1s. edition 1939, Watts & Co.).

Chapter VI

THE CATHOLIC CLERGY

The system of making priests I have described in my *Twelve Years in a Monastery*. Recruits are now sought at a very early age, and usually from the less educated class. In order that I may state the case quite accurately, I run over, in memory, the list of my fellow-students and the students who were later put under my charge. Of thirty whom I recall, fifteen were sons of small Irish farmers or shopkeepers, and ten of the remainder were Irish or of Irish extraction, and of the working class. Two solicitors and a chartered accountant found their way into the category, but all three found their way out of it. My priestly colleagues were similar in type. The theory was that we kept our eyes open for promising Catholic boys, and were prepared to exact little or no fee for their training. But even under these conditions the supply was very scanty, and the intellectual qualification had to be reduced to a disgraceful level. Few of them would, in "the world," have ever earned £150 a year. A very large proportion are the sons of Irish peasants or farmers.

This was the supply for a monastic order (the Order of St. Francis), and is not quite typical. But the secular (or ordinary parochial) clergy is not much more fortunate in its recruits. Jesuits and Benedictines, who control large schools and induce some of the pupils to join them, have more access to the Catholic middle-class, though they do not as a rule secure the more intelligent of their pupils. The

Church now, in all countries, has a difficulty in securing the proper type of recruits, and the theoretical qualifications have to be considerably lowered. As a rule, the priesthood is recruited by the adoption of young boys to whom ordination means promotion to a position and prestige which their personal merits would not otherwise obtain for them.

This casts the burden of their training almost entirely upon the Church, and their education is generally very poor. Very few priests could read any Latin author (except Cæsar) at sight, or make much sense of Horace, Tacitus, or Juvenal. Of Greek they have, as a rule, received only an elementary knowledge, which they soon forget. Of science, history, and philosophy, in the modern sense, they, as a rule, know nothing.

Science is taught in very few training-colleges for the clergy, and then only in the most elementary form and for a very short time. History is represented only by a few lessons, from Catholic writers, on Church history.

Lest I seem to speak merely from prejudice, let me illustrate the point. It is sometimes plaintively said by Catholics that I now use against "my mother the Church" the instruction she gave me. This is ridiculous. I received lessons even in Latin only for nine months, and was barely taught to read Cicero. It is by personal and private labour that I acquired a complete command of Latin. Of Greek I was scarcely taught the elements, and was again thrown upon my own exertions; and the same must be said of French. I had an elementary course of Hebrew and Syriac, which is now of no use to me. Other languages I have acquired entirely since I left the Church. In science and history I did not receive one single lesson in the whole course of my training; and, as I said, my "philosophy" had as little relation to modern philosophy as astrology has to astronomy.

The value of the education given to me in the Church was made plain the moment I returned to "the world." Although I had headed every class I ever entered, and had by immense personal exertion gone leagues beyond the rudimentary lessons I had received, I could not get a position as teacher at two pounds a week. My friend Mr. Forbes, of Balliol, a generous sympathizer, regretfully told me, after a short examination, that my "education" was quite useless.

And this is the general experience. While I was a priest three of my colleagues, one a youngish man of considerable energy, secretly left the Church and tried to earn their living. Each failed, and had to return; and I presume that they are to-day, with scepticism in their hearts, eloquently expounding the faith to audiences who shudder at the mention of *my* name. Since those days I have been asked for advice or assistance by many priests who had lost their faith and would leave the Church. In nearly every case the man proved unable to earn his living, and he either did not venture out of or returned to his clerical nest. The Church must have a high proportion of such men. No Catholic can be sure that the priest to whom he confesses his sins, or whose eloquent sermons on the faith he so much admires, is not a secret sceptic.

The sermons of the bulk of the clergy will, if any person has the courage to hear a few, confirm my estimate of their culture. Catholic literature affords still stronger confirmation. I have examined in the first chapter of this section some samples of what professes to be the highest Catholic scholarship. The extraordinary statements and omissions of these writers are largely due to "zeal," but it is also a fact that few of them know history. How much of the historical literature of our time, apart from "Catholic Truth," is written by Catholic priests? What is the standard

of scholarship of the myriads of Jesuits, Benedictines, Dominicans, and so on, who have the most ample leisure to devote to study, no anxiety about income, and every incentive to write? It is disreputable. The small books and pamphlets they issue, generally through "Truth Societies," are painful reading to any scholar. Whether the subject be history, philosophy, or science, their statements and their authorities are hopelessly antiquated, their ignorance is vast, their points are trifling.

So far I have spoken of the intellectual culture of the clergy, or its absence. On the moral side the situation is analogous. In theory, only boys of exceptional character and deep religious feeling must be accepted for the priesthood. In practice, owing to the dearth of vocations, the Church has to lower the moral and spiritual, as well as the intellectual, qualifications. My students, fellow-students, and colleagues had very rarely any exceptional character or deep religious feeling. Of eight boys under my charge at one time I had to report one as hopelessly stupid, and he was reluctantly dismissed; and another as, apparently, addicted to secret vice, but he was clever, and was not dismissed. The boy makes the man. The general level of character among priests is not nearly as high as, let us say, among teachers or doctors.

It will therefore be understood that the sexual strain upon the priesthood is too great for very many of them to endure. They either make their "vow of chastity" before they attain puberty, and do not realize what it means, or they are already too deeply pledged to the priestly career, and too eager for its prestige, to draw back. The system of celibacy is from every point of view utterly mischievous, and more than once priests have agitated for its abolition. When we reflect that the clergy are, as a body, not of exceptionally high character (however "nice"

the ladies of the parish may deem them), that they eat well and drink even better, that numbers of them are sceptics, and that they daily pay solitary visits to ladies, one does not need very much knowledge of human nature to forecast the result.

To make a precise statement as to the extent of priestly immorality is not possible. My clerical career was short, and a young priest, such as I was, is generally shielded from knowledge of "scandals." My most esteemed colleagues deliberately lied to me on one occasion in order to conceal such a case. Yet much came to my knowledge. Of the cases to which I may refer without indelicacy there are the *liaison* which I have already mentioned; another colleague whose name was currently given to a certain lady; a young priest who confided to me that he rivalled Don Juan in the number of his assignations; another who told me that he slept habitually with his housekeeper, who turned out on further inquiry to be his sister; another who admitted to me that he left the Church solely to marry a woman, and has since returned to it; another whose servant told me that she was *enceinte*. There were, in addition, many cases of isolated misconduct, with servants or parishioners; and it may be assumed that the many who leave, and are starved into "conversion," do not strictly observe their vows. There is, plainly, a large amount of priestly immorality, but it is not a matter on which one can make precise statements. It is, naturally, more secluded than a case that I saw in a Melbourne Hotel a few years ago, where a burly young Irish priest, partly intoxicated, walked flagrantly upstairs with a barmaid. It was not a residential hotel. Ex-priests with whom I have discussed, men of more experience than I, say that about half the priests do not believe and the majority are immoral.

Drinking is, as will be supposed, a prevailing habit; but here again it is futile to seek statistics of intoxica-

tion. The anti-Catholic American press and literature abound in detailed charges of both vice and drunkenness and may dispense me from pursuing an unpleasant subject. I have dealt with it, as fully as I care to do, in my autobiography, *Twelve Years in a Monastery*. The clergy are quite as human as the Popes, and the heavy pressure upon their character very frequently proves too great for them.

In my autobiography I have also explained how it is that the defects of the clergy are so largely unknown to the Catholic laity. The utmost precautions are taken to prevent scandal. In my own monastic body it was forbidden under pain of eternal damnation to drink a drop of alcohol within two miles of the monastery! Even this drastic rule broke down at times, but it had the general effect of concealing from the people the very considerable imbibing capacity of their priests. Inside the monastery the supply of drink was more than generous. No one took *less* than two pints of strong ale a day, and there were frequent carouses with wine and whisky. Actual intoxication was rare, but not punished, as long as it was kept within the house.

The same care was taken to prevent any kind of "scandal" from reaching the ears of the laity. The superior of our monastery at Forest Gate (London) suddenly disappeared, and not only the laity, but young priests like myself, were assured that he had "gone on the foreign missions." I learned months later that he was at the time living, as a layman, only three miles away. He could not earn his living and so he returned.

As is well known, the Catholic doctrine about truthfulness is peculiar. It is sometimes believed that the doctrine of "mental reservation" is a medieval eccentricity which modern Catholic theologians no longer countenance. This is entirely wrong. I have before me the volume of *Moral Theology* (by Father

Lehmkuhl), from which I was taught that remarkable "science of sin." The Jesuit author (I, 453) explains, and it is general Catholic teaching, that a mental reservation is "sometimes lawful and even necessary," and that where it is lawful one may even confirm one's words (which obviously deceive the hearer) on oath! The human justification of this kind of lying is said to be that sometimes the inquirer "has no right to the full truth." The Protestant will, however, be amazed to hear that the Jesuit bases his doctrine boldly upon the Gospels (*Mark* xiii, 32 and *John* vii, 8). The doctrine is frequently twisted so as to cover the most flagrant untruthfulness. I have given experiences elsewhere, and Count Hoensbroech describes the same, or an even worse, state of things in Jesuit seminaries.[1]

In regard to all these matters the world of the clergy is as securely closed against the laity as is the world of modern culture. The fiction of holiness must be sustained in every respect. The laity must be induced to think that the magic of ordination or consecration lends a triple armour to weak human nature. When a great prelate, whom all have regarded as almost superhuman in character, dies, his life is written in heroics; and the laity are deliberately duped.

I am tempted to illustrate this from the life of Cardinal Manning. I should be sorry to lower any man's reasonable appreciation of Manning. Many years after his death, and after my secession, I heard, at first hand, a story of Manning which may here see the light. My informant, an ex-nun, a lady of high character, had been converted by Manning and allowed or induced to enter a convent. Some years later, shocked and disgusted by the life of this London convent, she walked out, in her nun's costume, and sought Manning's house at Westminster. "What

[1] *Fourteen Years a Jesuit*, II, 302-19.

have you done?" he asked gravely; but he saw her draw in a long breath, to begin a long story, and he quietly checked her. "What are you *going* to do?" he asked. She said firmly that she would demand her money back from that convent, return to "the world," and discard Catholicism; *and Cardinal Manning secretly assisted her and secured her money for her.* It was, in the Church's code, a mortal sin, entailing a very dire eternal damnation on Henry Manning. But it is the finest thing I ever heard of him or any other prelate.

Yet not on those lines must the biography of a Catholic prelate be written. It happens that the task of writing Manning's life was entrusted to one who had some feeling of human candour, and that my chief friend and colleague, F. David Fleming, was able to follow, and describe to me, the progress of the work. There were to be omissions, of course: notably of the fact that (so F. David said) Manning had a daughter. But the long and bitter feuds with Cardinal Newman and the Jesuits and others were to be related. They were not related. Pressure was used; and Manning's very human nature turned out, when the volume finally appeared, to be of the usual stained-glass-saint variety.

From Pope to curate the clergy are much more human and less religious than the laity think. But our monasteries and convents, the Catholic will exclaim, surely you will leave about *these* the odour of sanctity for which we venerate them! Most assuredly I will not, but I have written so much about them that a short summary will suffice here.

All that I have written in this chapter about the relative poorness of character of the clergy applies especially to monks, since it was among these that my life was cast. They, above all, ensnare their recruits as young as possible. In the monstrous crime of laying a life-burden of celibacy upon the

immature they sin far worse than the secular clergy, for they encourage the taking of the vow at sixteen. They plead that " scarcity " of vocations compels this, and I know no more sordid reason for a thoroughly despicable practice. Let them perish if they cannot get mature men to embrace their antiquated and ridiculous ideals. And they know well the issue. They, by painting in high colours the prestige of the clerical state, create artificially what they call a " vocation " in the mind of young boys whose prospect in life is not brilliant, and in mature age these boys will simply get as much of the comfort of life as they can.

The result is that the monastic system is a fraud and hypocrisy from beginning to end. Of immoral men or drunkards the proportion is much the same as I have suggested for the clergy in general. In summing up my experience I said, long ago, that about one monk in ten is deeply religious, and about one in ten quite unscrupulous. Reviewing my memory, with more mature judgment, and much more knowledge, I should say that less than one in ten has a deep religious feeling, and probably about half are immoral. At all events, seven or eight in ten have no such religious sentiment as their profession demands, and their life would be intolerable but for the generous supply of liquor, the almost complete neglect (in the house) of their regulations, the possesion by each of money (in defiance of their vows), and the incessant visiting of their lady parishioners. Their long religious ceremonies are an empty and dreary formalism. Their life is, in spirit and letter, one sustained defiance of their professions.

Monasteries on the continent and in South America are even more sensual and hypocritical than in England and America; and there is little to choose between the various monastic or semi-monastic bodies. I have letters from South America describing clerical

morals exactly as they were in the Middle Ages, and Catholic writers have admitted that until the Revolution priests in Spain were habitually and frivolously immoral. From a desire to be entirely honest with my readers, I said in my early work that the Passionists, the Trappists, and the Cistercians seemed to lead a stricter life. A few years later I met an ex-Passionist, of the Highgate community, the Rev. James Waring, who told me that I was entirely wrong as far as his body were concerned. As to the Trappists, read Father J. B. Mooney's account of his life among them. In fine, an American friend of high character told me an extraordinary experience he had with the Cistercians of the Grand Chartreuse in France. A traveller in their famous liqueur took him at night to the monastery, and took also a quantity of the lightest French and Spanish illustrated papers; and far into the night a large party of the monks caroused and laughed with them over the illustrations.

As to the nuns, I will repeat what I have always said. I have always found them ladies in my limited experience; far more human, less religious, far less happy than Catholics imagine, but sincerely trying to practise their professions. I am certainly not in a position to deny darker accounts which are sometimes given. Local corruption is always possible. But I have had no reason to suspect it, and the several ex-nuns I have met in London confirm me. The burden usually undertaken in early and innocent youth is intolerable. The life is petty, vexatious, and generally useless. The " Holy Mother the Church " which seduces fair and happy young girls to enter such homes for life before they know what life and love mean is a criminal against humanity.

That is the upshot of the matter. The Catholic will wearily protest that these things do not affect his belief. He never, he says, pretended that Popes or priests, monks or nuns, were " impeccable." He

finds wonderful consolation in that blessed word. But he continues, all the same, to speak about his Holy Father, and Holy Church, and holy orders, and holy monks and nuns. He continues, with a monumental irony, to slight Protestantism because it has " none of these things "!

The minute and dreary picture of the monastic world which I give in my *Twelve Years in a Monastery* he is taught to regard as a piece of bilious mendacity. Yet when Father Bede Wrigley, quite the most upright of my old colleagues, saw a copy of that book in my library, the only censure he had was that I had no right to describe " our private life." And when the book was discussed at a clerical dinner in London, Cardinal Bourne—so one who was present and heard him told me—merely said: " It is true—though, of course, it is just a sweeping together of the worse things." It is strictly and scrupulously true, *and the whole truth*; as is also the picture I have drawn in a pseudonymous novel (ostensibly by " Arnold Wright ") entitled *In the Shade of the Cloister*. It is true of all monasticism, and of the general condition of the clergy. And if that is so, the Catholic may judge whether he is or is not kept by the clergy and the Catholic writers in a fool's paradise; whether there is quite so much of the Holy Ghost in his Church as he imagined.

Note.—That there is in this chapter and in my *Twelve Years in a Monastery* no exaggeration—that, on the contrary, my youth in the Church prevented me from learning the whole truth—has now been shown by the amazing conviction of thousands of monks and clerics in Germany and Austria of the worst corruption. While Catholics repeatedly got English papers to say that the charges were Nazi slanders, no paper and no publisher would permit me to tell the full truth. But in my *Papacy in Politics To-day* (Ch. V) I have at least been able to show that the trials were unimpeachable: held in Catholic cities, by Catholic officials and police, *with Catholic witnesses alone*, and accepted by German Catholics.

Chapter VII

THE LOSSES OF THE CHURCH

One of the funniest aspects of the situation as regards the Roman Church in Great Britain is the astonishment at each other of Catholics and non-Catholics. How, asks the innocent non-Catholic when he reads such things as I have described, can this sort of thing be accepted by grown-up and educated men and women in the twentieth century? He tactfully approaches a Catholic neighbour, and finds that the man—I mean, lady—cherishes a weird and wonderful version of the history of the Holy Fathers and their Holy Church, and regards the teaching and practice of the Church as so beautiful that everybody who learns the truth about them is at once won.

You will even meet Catholics who will tell you that the fact that there is not a stampede into the Church is a wise dispensation of Providence. Its organization would be apt to be demoralized if the return of the nations to Rome were too rapid. But, your neighbour adds, the change is proceeding satisfactorily. While the ministers of other Churches speak mournfully of decay and losses, the Catholic Church moves on majestically, increasing in numbers far beyond its natural increment of births, from decade to decade. Have not even unbelievers said repeatedly that the future lies simply between two forces, Rome and Reason?

But from this it follows only that the audacity of Catholic apologists succeeds at times in deceiving unbelievers, for the claim that the Church is gaining ground in the world is the last and biggest untruth

with which the priests dupe their people. On the first page of this book I say that the Church has only about 200,000,000 followers, and that half of these are illiterate. That was written twenty-two years ago, yet it is roundly true to-day. The Church then claimed about 300,000,000 followers, but I had proved from official statistics and Catholic admissions in various countries that 100,000,000 of these—seceders and children of seceders—were no longer Catholics. This was shown in my *Decay of the Church of Rome* (1909); and, as the Roman clergy had not at that time secured their mischievous control of reviewing in the Press, the book was everywhere accepted as a sound, moderate, and unanswerable analysis.[1]

But if the reader prefers to entertain the Catholic estimate of membership (about 300,000,000) twenty-two years ago, what ought it, if the Church is growing, to be to-day? At least 450,000,000, not counting converts. The Church bitterly opposes birth control. This may seem ironical in view of the historical survey of its morals which I made in the first part of the book, and when we recall that until near the close of the last century it fully approved the castration of boys for singing even in the Papal choir at Rome[2];

[1] This, by the way, is the only book of mine (out of about 130, a large number of which deal with the Roman Church) to which any Catholic writer has "replied." The "reply" (*The Rationalist as Prophet*, by the Jesuit Keating) is a twopenny pamphlet in which not a single item of my 300 pages of severe evidence is noticed! It is a cheap screed of abuse and loose rhetoric. The Jesuit speaks of me as "a certain Mr. McCabe" (several of my books had already sold 50,000 copies), and falsely states my position in the Church. The pamphlet, reprinted, is still the only reply to my works which Catholics are allowed to read.

[2] There is here an instance of what the Catholics were really allowed to do in the last edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. In earlier editions this notorious fact was given (article "Eunuchs") as an item of common knowledge. In the last edition not merely is it suppressed, but the truth is gravely perverted.

but the motive is, of course, not delicacy. It is, as a priest bluntly said to a meeting of Catholic women, to secure an increasing membership for the Church until it " beats the Protestants." Now, in a modern civilization an unrestricted birth rate would, it is estimated by experts, give an increase of population of more than 20 per cent. per decade. Yet the Catholic world-total given in current reference-books (*The World Almanac*, *Statesman's Year Book*, etc.), and supplied to them by the Catholic authorities, is only 331,000,000. That shows, not an advance, but a loss of a further 100,000,000; and still half the remainder (in Latin America, the Philippines, and other backward countries) are either totally illiterate or of such rudimentary literacy (Polish, Italian, Spanish, Croat, Irish, etc., peasants) that the Church can hardly boast of holding their allegiance.

Some modification of this conclusion is required because large numbers of Catholic women in Great Britain, America, France, etc., now defy the Church and practise birth control; but again let me refer the reader to published, and in this case official, Catholic statistics. The *English Catholic Directory* proudly gives each year the figures which testify to the growth of the Church: the steady rise of baptisms, school-children, marriages, and membership. How nice it must look to the Catholic! But the figures really betray an extraordinary situation, and it is amazing how few people see it.

Child-baptisms, which is the same as Catholic births, are given as 69,184 in 1938, when the total births in England and Wales were 621,603. Children in Catholic schools are given as 383,267, while the total number for England and Wales is more than 5,000,000. Marriages in Catholic churches are correctly stated to be 6·5 per cent. of the whole; and the number of Catholics is claimed to be 2,361,504 in a total population of about 40,000,000. Do you

see the joke? Avoiding decimals and complicated sums, these figures mean that Catholics are one-ninth of the community if we go by births: one-fourteenth if we go by percentage of school-children: one-fifteenth if we go by marriages: yet less than one in sixteen even if we accept their grossly exaggerated statement of their numbers! We will return to the significance of these figures, but they put my present point beyond any cavil. The proportion of Catholic births (child-baptisms) to the total births shows that the Catholic increase by births is enormously higher than the general national increase, and they therefore ought, if they numbered 300,000,000 a quarter of a century ago, to be now, on the ground of births alone, 450,000,000 or 500,000,000. In Catholic countries their birth rate is higher than in England.

But even 331,000,000—the *Catholic Directory* blatantly, without any detailed explanation, says 366,185,084 (admire the precise unit, as if they had counted heads)—is a gross exaggeration of the Catholic world-total. It is based upon figures which are given in the *Orbis Catholicus*, an official Roman publication. They provoke a smile. For France the book claims "most" of the population (42,000,000) as Catholic; and other works report, on the strength of this, that there are 40,000,000 Catholics in the country. But even the more optimistic French Catholic writers do not claim more than 10,000,000, so we at once deduct 30,000,000 or so from the world-total. For Germany the book claims 23,750,000, and we shall see that there cannot be more than 10,000,000; and the losses in Austria and Czecho-Slovakia raise the total which we must deduct to at least 20,000,000. Almost the entire population of Spain is included in the 331,000,000, though the *Orbis Catholicus* (written before the victory of Franco-Benito-Adolph) is here vague, whereas we have even Irish Jesuits admitting that at least 14,000,000, if not 20,000,000, must be

deducted. In Italy, we are told, "practically all" are Catholics; and we shall see that more than 10,000,000 are not. The Mexicans (16,000,000) are said to be 90 per cent. loyal to the Pope; which, in view of recent Mexican history, is amusing. In Argentina "nearly all" the 12,000,000 are Catholics; and the book then notes that the country has secular education, which the Church bitterly loathes. In Chile, where the Church is disestablished and the schools are closed against it, the "great majority" are said to be Catholics. In Uruguay "practically all" are Catholics, but the civil power is "definitely hostile to the Church." That is already an unchallengeable deduction of 100,000,000 from the Catholic total, but, since neither papers nor books now tell English readers the truth about these matters, the astonished reader will desire some details. I gave these in my recent *Papacy in Politics To-day* (1937), and may here be brief.

France is the most audacious instance of the complete recklessness, yet impunity, with which Catholics make their claims. The country has had for sixty years a Government which the Vatican calls "Atheistic," and it has passed every measure which the Church most bitterly opposes. This Government is returned placidly at every election on a basis of manhood suffrage, and the country has not known a Catholic statesman, much less President, since 1880. Its higher scholarship, in science, history, economics, etc., is solidly Atheistic, the Church claiming only a few artists, literary men, and soldiers amongst men of distinction. In fine, such recent Catholic writers on the subject as Georges Goyau and Denis Gwynn admit that French Catholic estimates of their numbers range from 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 (in nearly 42,000,000), and that the higher figure is inadmissible.

English priests try to confuse the public mind in

regard to this awkward fact, which heavily discredits all their statistics, by drawing a distinction between "practising" and "non-practising" Catholics. This is just cheating. A Catholic is supposed to incur eternal damnation every time he fails to attend Mass on Sunday, except for "grave reason," or to confess and communicate once a year. Now, a Catholic of poor character may do this occasionally, just as he may get drunk, but to count as Catholics 30,000,000 people who never go to Mass or confession is to deceive the public. A truthful apologist would explain to the reader that his Church holds that there is no such thing as a seceder—that it still counts as a Catholic one who has become a Protestant or a Buddhist—but in England and America religious diplomacy is holier than truth. Remember, however, in reading Catholic statistics, that they include all who were in their infancy baptised in the Church, whether they have remained loyal to it or not, unless they have been formally excommunicated, which is now a ceremony that is rarer than coronations.

Next, we saw, the *Orbis Catholicus* counts nearly 24,000,000 Catholics in Germany; yet, as I proved in my *Papacy in Politics To-day*, there are not more than 10,000,000. One very definite indication will suffice here. The German Catholics had a strict political organization until the Nazis grasped power, and at the last entirely free election, in 1932, no genuine Catholic failed to vote for his party. Large numbers of Jews also voted with them. What was the result? They got about *one-seventh* of the total vote (5,300,000 out of 35,000,000). The Socialists and Communists, who were under the ban of the Church as much as the Nazis, got 13,000,000 votes: the Nazis 11,700,000. On this very rigorous test the Catholics are shown to be about one-seventh of the population, or about 10,000,000. They have lost at least 10,000,000 in the last twenty years. Yet our reference books con-

tinue to make them a body of 20,000,000, and the reader wonders how Hitler is able to defy one-third of his country, as well as the Socialists and Communists, even in time of war.

This was the situation eight years ago. It is now far worse. German Catholics bitterly assailed their leaders for, on instructions from Rome—which really means from the present Pope, who was then Secretary of State—trusting Hitler's promises and supporting him at the final election (1933), and a large number of them have yielded under Nazi economic pressure and left the Church. This drift increased alarmingly when the exposure of appalling vice in monasteries all over Germany continued year after year in courts in which, German Catholics admit, there was no question of corruption or malpractice, and the Pope endorsed the charges by suppressing whole provinces of monks. The Catholic Church in Germany, of which the Vatican was so proud, is to-day in ruins.

The same disintegrating forces have now been at work in Austria and Czecho-Slovakia, and have made a deadly beginning in Poland. Even before the brutal Nazi expansion, the Catholic figures for these countries were formally mendacious. The *Orbis Catholicus* for 1938 claimed that 93 per cent. of the Austrians were Catholics, yet the compiler (an English priest) and every writer who repeated the figure knew that, to the bitter mortification of the Church, Vienna and some other cities were so predominantly anti-Catholic that Socialists had held power in them, on a clean basis of manhood suffrage, for nearly twenty years after the last war. The Vatican was compelled to use the treachery and violence of Dollfuss to crush them. In the case of Czecho-Slovakia we have the admission of a Czech priest in the most important Catholic weekly in England (*Tablet*, October 31, 1936) that 1,900,000 Catholics had left the Church between 1919 and that date; and a priest's admission

of drift may be multiplied by two and his claim of membership divided by two.

Poland now, to the extreme concern of the Vatican, enters the list of the doomed. There was no more Catholic country in the world, but in the provinces which Russia has taken over the priests will pay heavily for the fierce persecution they, with the full approval of the Vatican, exercised on non-Catholics from 1919 to 1939, and in the provinces occupied by Germany the Church suffers like the general population. At least 20,000,000 have been lost by the Vatican since 1918 in Germany, Austria, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland; and, under Nazi pressure, the Church continues to crumble.

For Spain, where the outcome of the war was still in doubt in 1938, the *Orbis Catholicus* makes no precise claim. It would stultify itself if it made the usual claim of " 90 per cent." or " practically all " at a time when the people held out for three years against armies which, literally, fought under the Papal banner and in spite of every ecclesiastical ban. A British M.P., a Catholic, had not even this elementary sense of humour. He published a pamphlet in which, as usual, " practically all " the Spaniards were said to be devout Catholics! About the same date an Irish Jesuit, Father Gannon, admitted in the *Irish Times* (January 23, 1937) that there were only " ten or fifteen million Catholics " in Spain. When a religious writer cannot make up his mind between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000 we may split the difference with him. That leaves a further 12,000,000 apostates to be deducted from the Catholic world-total.

Here again we need not rely upon the loose statements of Catholics and their critics. In recent years Catholicism has had as rigorous a political organization in Spain as in Germany, for from 1931 onward the Government, democratically elected, set out to accomplish a programme which the Church fiercely

resented. What was the result? The anti-clericals were returned at every election. In the cities the vote for them was three to one, showing that educated Spain has done with the Church.

It is sometimes said that in the last election before the rebellion of the Fascist-Catholics more votes were cast for these than for the anti-clericals, so that the war was not so much a rebellion as a legitimate recovery of power from wicked usurpers. This scandalous excuse for a ghastly war, which even the most cultivated and refined Catholic writers in England have repeated, is based upon the usual mendacity. Although the Socialist Government had rather foolishly (in the circumstances) extended the vote to women before that election, the total anti-clerical vote, Left Wing and Centre (Liberal), was 4,696,000 against a Right-Wing vote of 4,750,000. But the total vote cast was 3,000,000 short of the number of men and women who were entitled to vote, and everybody who has at least an elementary knowledge of Spain knows that this means that at least 2,000,000 Anarchists and Syndicalists, who never vote, must be added to the anti-clerical strength. Moreover, by that time large numbers of anti-clericals had become alarmed by the political development and on economic grounds had voted against "the Reds." To-day between 10,000,000 and 15,000,000 Spaniards brood over their hatred of the Church in silence under a canopy of terror.

In my *Papacy in Politics To-day* I showed that at least 15,000,000, and probably a much higher figure, must be deducted from the Catholic total for Latin America. In what used to be the most Catholic Republic of South America, Chile, the bitterly anti-clerical Socialists won the election in 1922, and their power was destroyed only by the grossest corruption. In Peru, which had been almost as reactionary, the leader of the anti-clerical and revolutionary Apra had

100,000 votes at the Presidential Election, in spite of every device of crooked clerical-conservative manipulation. In Argentina, American missionaries stated a few years ago, the workers were so solidly anti-clerical that it was difficult for a Catholic to enter or remain in the Trade Unions. Brazil was almost equally advanced, and, as I said, the *Orbis Catholicus* admits that in Uruguay the Government is still "definitely hostile to the Church."

Of Mexico it is hardly necessary to speak. The Government, freely returned by the literate workers and the middle class at each election, has been anti-Catholic and cursed by the Church for twenty years. The spurts of rebellion which the priests (on funds supplied from the United States) organized, and often led, were ragged futilities, their troops consisting almost entirely of illiterate, and often savage, Indians. I travelled over thousands of miles of Mexico in the height of the struggle, and realized the utter mendacity of Catholic accounts of it.

In South America the Church has had the same bloody revenge as in Spain. Any reader who thinks that this is intemperate language should turn back to page 149 of this book. The Church still claims that it may, or must, shed the blood of seceders or inflict any penalties it thinks fit. The rapid growth of Communism and Socialism in Latin America after 1918 gave it the same opportunity as in Spain and Austria. It organized a coalition of reactionaries in every Republic except Uruguay (and Argentina remains fairly moderate) and got its critics brutally suppressed. The Press of the world was silent, because suppressing "Reds" is a public service. In point of fact, many of the finest middle-class men suffer torture and vile conditions in the jails of Brazil, Chile, and Peru to-day for their criticism of the corrupt Latin Church and its exploitation of tens of millions of illiterate Indians.

I must refer the reader again to my earlier book for an adequate discussion of the Church's immense losses in the United States, and must be content here with two points. The first is that a man need not do an hour's research to perceive that figures of membership of the Roman Church in America are as dishonest as such figures are in the case of Great Britain. For instance, the 1926 Census gave the figure (supplied, of course, by the Church) as 18,605,000. The American *Catholic Directory* (using the same sources) gave 20,709,015, and the egregious Father Guilday was permitted to say in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1929) that the real figure was 25,000,000. These figures (except the fantastic Guilday total) are based upon the reports of the parish priests—hence the ludicrous appearance of accuracy down to a unit—and even one or two American Catholic publications have shown and protested against the gross deception of the public. Letters from Catholic bishops to their priests, urging them to include "bad" Catholics (seceders) with good in their totals so as to beat the Protestant figures, have been published. See a mass of evidence in John F. Moore's *Will America Become Catholic?* (1931). There are probably not more than 15,000,000 Catholics in the United States, whereas if the Church had kept the allegiance of all Catholic immigrants (Irish, Italian, Polish, German, Mexican, etc.) and their descendants, it would, without converts, now have more than 40,000,000 members.

The second point is that while the American Catholic Church is the richest and most powerful in the world—it has property of the value of $1,000,000,000, fifty newspapers, four or five wireless stations, etc.—it is one of the poorest in culture, and has very grave statistics of crime and vice. Of the 30,000 men of distinction in the American *Who's Who*, only 7 per 100,000 are Catholics—1185 per

100,000 are Unitarians—and these are largely clerical officials or politicians. It has the same percentage of cultural leaders as the despised Fundamentalists. On the other hand, it not only controls the notorious Tammany, but an analysis of criminals in Sing Sing which was made by a Catholic chaplain and published in the *Commonweal* (December 14, 1932) revealed that a total of 1581 prisoners no less than 855 were Catholics. Statistics of prostitution in New York tell much the same story, and the representation of the Church in the alcoholic world is notorious. There are non-Catholics who profess to admire the growth of the Church because it means "such a force for good"; they then chide me for telling such facts as these. The Roman Church is to-day an organization for augmenting the power and wealth of the clerical body and the hierarchy.

In Italy between 10,000,000 and 20,000,000 must be deducted. Since the Pope made (for £19,000,000 and political independence) his infamous compact to support Mussolini, the tyranny makes it impossible to get closer to the figures, but it would be ingenuous to ask us to believe that the Socialists, who were considerably more than a third of the voters as long as elections were free, have joined the Church. Even at that time, moreover, all the middle-class Liberals and a large proportion of the Fascists were anti-Catholic. It is very safe to deduct a third of the population, or 14,000,000, from the Catholic total for Italy.

I cannot here cover the whole ground, and must be content to say that in all countries except a few backward lands (Ireland, Poland, etc.) one must deduct from a fourth to a third of the Catholic total. I have given details in earlier books, but election and other precise data which I reproduce here for ten countries imply a loss of over 100,000,000. The Church has lost at least 50,000,000 followers since

1919. Hence its truculent policy and alliance with reactionary powers everywhere.

What about Great Britain? In my *Decay of the Church of Rome* I gave an exhaustive analysis of the figures to 1909 and showed that the loss to date was 2,250,000 and the number of Catholics about 1,500,000. I showed earlier in this chapter that the Catholic birth rate is enormously higher than the general national birth rate, and therefore, without any conversions, the total ought now to be considerably over 2,500,000. Add the Catholic claim of 10,000 adult converts a year and their children, and you get a further 400,000. But we have still to add immigrants from Ireland, and for the last ten years the number has been prodigious. In October, 1937, the *Cork Examiner* lamented that in nine months of that year 37,000 had migrated from the Free State to Great Britain, besides an unknown number through Ulster. That means 50,000 (putting 50,000 British "on the dole") a year, or certainly half a million in thirty years. So the Church in Great Britain should now have about 4,000,000 members. It claims 3,000,000 (including 600,000 in Scotland), and the figures I have given show that 2,000,000 is the highest we can admit. The facts are making the Catholic laity impatient. In a recent prominent discussion of the "leakage" in the *Catholic Herald* (August 11, 1939) it was stated that exact inquiry in a London parish showed that 61 per cent. of the boys who passed through the Catholic school left the Church! Yet these are all included in the Catholic statistics. Probably about 1,500,000 is the correct figure for England and Wales, or nearly a million less than is claimed, revealing a loss of some 2,000,000 in the present century. But pray understand that these are mostly poor or obscure folk. All is well, because the *Catholic Directory* proudly displays a list of 27 Peers and Baronets and 27 "Lords

by Courtesy" (but no distinguished scientists, historians, philosophers, economists, etc.).

The Roman Church is an anachronism, an imposture, which the world is rapidly finding out. It fights with every foul weapon against the menace; political intrigue, mendacity—I have surely shown that—to its own people and the world, coercion of editors, publishers, booksellers, and librarians, material profit to its members against non-Catholics, libel of its critics, and, where the conditions permit (South America, Portugal, and Spain, for instance), prison, torture, and guns. It is poor in scholarship and rich in crime. It hates and fears truth. It still prefers the long cloak and dagger, the intrigue and the secret bullying. If Englishmen would but realize that it counts only about one-thirtieth of the people of their country, or far less if you exclude immigrants, they would not meekly tolerate the power it arrogates.

Ten years have passed since my last revision of this little work: ten of the most fateful years in modern history. What part did the Roman Church play in the dramatic and tragic events of those years? And how does it stand to-day? The first six years witnessed the embroilment of the world in the most terrible war of all time, and that the Vatican cooperated with and aided the Nazis, Fascists, and Japanese, who, from sheer greed, brought this terrible calamity upon the race has been proved beyond question in a large number of works. I have given a summary of the evidence in small special booklets (*The Vatican and the Nazis*, *The Pope and the Italian Jackal*, *The Papacy in France*, and *Russia and the Roman Church*), and Professor Salvemini has proved the Vatican's guilt in the case of Italy in a series of learned works. The policy with which the Vatican prepared the way, from South America to Japan, for this stupendous conspiracy against the race is described

in my *Papacy in Politics To-day* (Watts & Co.; fourth edition, now in preparation; to be published in 1951).

When Russia turned the tide of Nazi success and the intervention of America made the triumph of the Western Allies a certainty the Vatican discovered that it is neutral in politics. It had already quarrelled with Hitler because he refused to carry out the solemn promises, embodied in a Concordat, with which he had bought the support of the Vatican and the German Catholics. The war was hardly over when, in Britain and America, Catholic writers, with their habitual mendacity, brazenly claimed that the Catholics were the only force in Germany that had never bent the knee to Baal (Hitler). Any history of recent times in Germany gives the facts which expose this lie. Even the very impartial *Annual Register* records that it was the Catholics of Bavaria, under orders from their bishops, who finally gave Hitler his powers, and it is ordinary historical teaching that, while the Communist deputies were liquidated before the final election and the Socialist deputies flatly refused the dictatorial powers which Hitler asked and were in their turn liquidated, the Catholic representatives kissed the feet of the arch-criminal until he refused to carry out the provisions of the Concordat. They were still moderate in their criticisms until in 1936 the German courts—not Nazi courts but in the Catholic cities—were encouraged to uncover the long-suspected and incredible corruption of the German monks and priests, some thousands of whom went to jail, mainly on a charge of unnatural vice.

During the last phase of the War and the first phase of what is ironically called the Peace the Vatican was silent. It then entered upon a policy as unscrupulous as that which it had followed early in the last century, for which the Catholic historian, Lord Acton, described the Popes as "worse than the Old Man of the Mountains," the most murderous figure in history.

It saw that America was now disposed to carry out the work which Hitler had professed to be the sole aim of his mighty armament: the destruction of Communism and Socialism. No other Press in the world was so poisonous in creating hatred of Russia as the Catholic, especially in America, and in the various countries of Europe the Catholics were instructed to march under a false banner (the Popular Republican Movement, the Christian Democrats, the Peasants' Party, etc.) so as to sweep together all anti-Socialist elements, Liberal, Radical, or Conservative, in each country. By this manœuvre the Vatican has won enormous favour, and prestige in America and a power of which it had ceased to dream in Britain, France, and Italy. Analysis of electoral statistics shows, when one recollects that Catholics are only the core of these movements, that numerically the Church has made no gains, and we have the grim but not unfamiliar spectacle of the Vatican gaining wealth and power by alliances with red-handed rulers like Franco, Salazar, and Perón, and with sinister forces that, in order to protect greed, threaten to engulf the world in a more barbaric war than ever.

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